GEORGE MAC DONALD

JOSEPH JOHNSON

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GEORGE MAC DONALD

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A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

By

JOSEPH JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF "THE MASTER'S LIKENESS" AND OTHER STORIES

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE

WITH GRATEFUL LOVE AND IN COMMON AFFECTION

TO THE LIVING AND ABIDING MEMORY

OF

GEORGE MAC DONALD

PREFACE

THIS tribute of love and respect was intended to be among the not too late offerings of affection, but while the sheets were passing through the press George Mac Donald received the call to enter the higher life, to be more alive than ever. So now, not to a dead friend, but to a living memory is this tribute of gratitude made.

In this offering of devotion there is no attempt made to write a biography or to look into the private career of the man or his family. No one shrank more from the vulgar public gaze than George Mac Donald. Knowing this, it would be unseemly to lift the veil that only those who knew him best and loved him most have any right to raise.

The writer does not pretend to attempt a critical review or exhaustive examination of Mac Donald's writings, but has simply selected representative books and typical portions to illustrate the main characteristic features of his works.

This appreciation is a note of admiration for the man and his writings by one who greatly loved him. The personal knowledge the writer has had of Mac Donald is slight, but the intense affection for the work and character of the saintly Poet-preacher and Religious-novelist is strong.

The facts of the life are gathered from many sources. A few friends who have known and loved Mac Donald have kindly given glimpses of him. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Miss Scott, Mrs. Sutton, Mrs. Reeve, Dr. Bruce, the late Dr. Japp, Mr. Arthur Hughes, Miss Annie Matheson, the Rev. J. Lewis of Huntly, and also to Dr. Greville Mac Donald for reading through the proofs and correcting some errors.

The account of the Manchester friends, though not greater than the influence they exercised, may seem out of proportion and perspective to others who as greatly valued him ; but information concerning them has been more accessible to the writer, and therefore they have had the more prominent place.

JOSEPH JOHNSON.

SALE, CHESHIRE,
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GEORGE MAC DONALD

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

Dr. George Mac Donald comes from a pure Celtic stock. He is a descendant of the Mac Donalds of Glencoe, who were driven forth from their original home at the time of the "Glencoe Massacre."

The Highlanders had been Jacobites, but an indemnity was offered to all who should take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary before the last day of 1691. All the heads of the clans complied except William McIan of Glencoe, the chief of the Mac Donalds, who held out until December 31st. On that day he went to Fort Augustus to take the oath, but to his surprise there was no one there to administer it. He was directed to Inverary, but owing to the deep snow

he did not arrive till January 6th, 1692. Here Sir Colin Campbell, the Sheriff of Argyle, consented to receive the oath; but Sir John Dalrymple, Secretary for Scotland, who bore a deadly hatred against the Mac Donalds, concealed from the King, McIan's tardy submission, and procured a warrant for the military execution of him and his tribe.

On February 1st a body of one hundred and twenty soldiers appeared in the Glen; they were commanded by Campbell of Glenlyon, uncle to McIan's wife, and were therefore heartily welcomed, and for a fortnight enjoyed free and hospitable entertainment.

On the evening of February 13th a party of soldiers was admitted as friends, but came as assassins. William McIan was murdered, also sixty men, women and children, and as many more perished from cold and hunger in the mountains.

About one hundred and fifty men made good their escape, and with them the family from which George Mac Donald sprang.

In the second Jacobite rebellion in favour of Charles Edward, son of the Pretender, two ancestors of George Mac Donald fought in the battle of Culloden Moor, the last stand the Stuarts made, and where they were completely defeated by the Earl of Cumberland, 1745. One of these Mac Donalds lost his sight in the battle. He was a

famous piper, and went to live at the little town of Portsoy in Banffshire, where he brought up many children. This ancestor possibly suggested the character of Duncan MacPhail the piper, whose magnificent hatred against the Campbells of Glenlyon is one of the most remarkable touches in the story of *Malcolm*, where also are given vivid pictures of Banffshire coast scenery and accounts of Portlossie and Seaton.

The family left Portsoy and came to Huntly, where George Mac Donald's grandfather, who still spoke Gaelic, became farmer and banker. His son (father of the distinguished writer), also a farmer, was a man of fine character, and evidently of strong personality, to whom the son owed more for influence and teaching than to any one else, excepting A. J. Scott.

As Thomas Jones once said of his mother, so it may be said of George Mac Donald's father, "Schoolmasters may teach us arithmetic, but our mothers teach us God." It was through the revealing grace of his father's life and example that George Mac Donald spelt out the meaning of the Divine Fatherhood, as he tells us in the dedication of the second volume of verses, "So I beheld my God in childhood's morn," for his father lifted the veil and "revealed man's glory, God's great human heart."

George Mac Donald was born November 10th, 1824, and grew up at the farm near Huntly,

which remains little altered at the present time.

His grandmother was a woman of strong and striking personality, and is drawn in vivid lines as Mrs. Falconer in *Robert Falconer*. She taught herself to write when nearly sixty, and by her determined will and intense religious convictions she left an indelible impression on her grandson's life.

She was a firm abstainer, before the first temperance societies were started. She was greatly interested towards the end of her life in the work of Father Mathew, and kept her hatred of all intoxicants to the last, leaving a request that none should be given at her funeral.

George Mac Donald's father was an upright and influential man, whose advice was often sought. He was also a deacon of the Huntly Congregational Church during the ministry of the Rev. John Hill.

When he was a young man he was obliged to undergo an operation for the removal of one of his legs. In later years he was a corn merchant and miller ; and during the time of the failure of the potato crop some of the Huntly people believed that he and his brother were storing up corn and meal in order to get higher prices. The feeling of resentment was so great that some of the rougher element of the town made an effigy of Mr. Mac Donald, and carried the figure, followed by a

considerable crowd, intending to burn it in front of the Mac Donalds' house. When the mob arrived, some one being ill in the house, Mr. Mac Donald went out to ask the noisy throng to move on. As he approached there was a momentary stillness, and seeing, to his surprise, the effigy, Mr. Mac Donald guessed the meaning of the disturbance, and quietly looking at the figure, he said, "It's not at all bad, lads, only it's a pity you made the wrong leg the wooden one." A burst of laughter followed this remark, and the crowd went off in good humour, and the figure was thrown over a wall.

Every Monday morning the Deacon used to go and see the Minister at the manse for prayer and conversation. This visit was a source of great help to Mr. Hill, and was always looked forward to by both with much interest.

George Mac Donald once said, when speaking of his father, that when he looked upon his face in death, so beautiful, so calm in victorious silence, he did not know whether to praise or weep, but the greatness of his father's joy in seeing *his* Father swallowed up the grief; besides, death could not take away anything his father had been or was to him.

His mother was a Miss MacKay, daughter of a Captain. She left four sons, dying soon after the novelist was born in 1824. His father married again, a Miss MacColl, who brought up the boys

with loyal and loving devotion, and to her training and influence George Mac Donald owed so much that he said when he should see both mothers in heaven he knew not which he should kiss first. His step-mother is still alive; she has reached the surprising age of one hundred, and is now living in peaceful seclusion at Aberdeen.

Mac Donald, like all imaginative children, very early in life received strong and lasting impressions. He has said in one of his books, "My own earliest definable memory is of a great funeral of one of the Dukes of Gordon when I was between two and three years old." And all through his life he has had a remarkably good memory, especially for people he has met.

We can see again and again in his poetry how deeply and intensely the early surroundings of his life made and left their memorable mark.

The Mac Donalds were in comfortable circumstances, without being burdened with wealth. Frugal, simple, and industrious was the family life, without luxury, and devoid of all worldly extravagance. The boys grew in wholesome influence to be morally healthy, to love truth and honour, and to learn that the first law of God is obedience, and that the foundation of all family blessedness lies in obedience, the father being the expression of the law and the mother the influence of the Gospel in the home. George

Mac Donald beautifully expresses this in *The Seaboard Parish*. Mr. Walton, a clergyman, thus speaks of the discipline in his home :

" I was a very strict disciplinarian—too much so, perhaps, sometimes ; my wife, on the other hand, was too much inclined, I thought, to excuse everything. I was law, she was grace. But grace often yielded to law, and law sometimes yielded to grace. Yet she represented the higher ; for in the ultimate triumph of grace, in the glad performance of the command from love of what is commanded, the law is fulfilled : the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. . . . Though obedience was the one thing I enforced, believing it the one thing upon which all family economy primarily depends, yet my object always was to set my children free from my law as soon as possible ; in a word, to help them to become, as soon as it might be, a law unto themselves. Then they would need no more of mine. Then I would go entirely over to the mother's higher side, and become to them, as much as in me lay, no longer law and truth, but grace and truth."

George Mac Donald has never wearied of enforcing the value of early learning obedience. Once, in his presence, a child asked its father for something, and the father refused. The child came again with the same request, when Mac Donald said, kindly but firmly, " Father said no, and that settles it." He recognised no appeal

from the parental authority. Absolute submission to the Father's will in heaven and earth is the home rule of the kingdom.

George Mac Donald's education began in the home. As a lad he attended the Congregational Church where his father was a deacon. The church had been founded and established by a powerful preacher, the Rev. George Cowie, who came to Huntly in 1760 and established a secession Church of Anti-burghers; but after thirty years he was driven out, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century built a new Independent Chapel, taking his congregation with him. He died soon after, having done a great work, and established a Sunday School, and evoked much interest in the London Missionary Society.

In 1816 the Rev. John Hill became the minister of the church. He was a man of much true piety and great devotion to his work, beloved by his people because of the goodness of his character and the kindliness of his life, and the untiring zeal of his labour. He was a strict Calvinist, and had no sympathy with those who taught that God loves all, that Christ died for all, and that the Holy Spirit strives with all. He continued to serve faithfully this one Church of his life until 1848, when he passed away.

It was under this narrow and exclusive teaching that George Mac Donald was brought up and first

began to think. The facts of religion, the manifestation of his own father's love, made him question the theoretical doctrine that denied the Fatherhood for all the children of earth. Slowly and surely Mac Donald felt his way into a truer faith and larger knowledge of the Word of God. He discovered that the only way to know the mind of God is obedience to the will of God. Then the light of a new revelation of God's love dawned upon his awakening soul.

George Mac Donald began his public education at the parish school at Huntly, and from there, in 1840, he went to King's College, Aberdeen University. Dr. Bruce, of Huddersfield, who was a fellow-student at that time, says there were two separate and distinct universities, the King's College in Old Aberdeen, and the Marischall College in the city itself, about one and a half miles apart. The former was mainly the resort of students from the country in the north of Scotland, and especially from the Highlands; the latter College was chiefly for the sons of city men, a younger set as a rule, who were, many of them, intended either for business or the legal profession, and did not always take their degree; whereas the Marischall students were older, frequently poorer, very hard-working and plodding, and intended for the Church, or the medical profession, or for military or civil service under the Government at home or in India.

There was very little in that old curriculum and the antiquated professors then at King's College to stimulate original thought or develop the imagination. Nevertheless, Mac Donald had already begun to write poetry. He exercised his mind in the play of fancy and love of romance; he drank of many fountains—from the books in the library and from the society of poets and literary men. He used to say, "Nothing ought to be put into verse that could be as well said in prose," and to this canon of art he strictly adhered all through life.

Dr. Bruce and he both attended the same place of worship on Sunday—Blackfriars Street Independent Chapel, then under the pastoral care the Rev. John Kennedy, afterwards Dr. Kennedy of Stepney, London. There was then a considerable number of Congregationalists in the University, who met each other at church and in their rooms. And some of them came every Sunday to dine with George Mac Donald and his brother Charles, who was then in business in Aberdeen.

Dr. Bruce came to college in Mac Donald's last year, when he was living with his brother Charles in the heart of the city. Both the brothers were very fine young men physically, intellectually, and morally. George was about the handsomest man in the University—with jet-black hair, a fine profile, and noble head. He wore a velvet coat, and

the minimum of a red gown left on his shoulders; in fact, only the "tippet" remained. He devoted himself more to the linguistic and literary side of study and to moral philosophy, rather than to mathematics and science. He distinguished himself in literature and philosophy. He shone in the debating society and in the moral philosophy class. He was a beautiful and impressive reader, and made a close study of Shakespeare and of the best English, Scottish, and German writers, both in poetry and prose.

He was fanciful and dreamy, saw visions and allegories where other men saw little or nothing. He was known among his fellow-students as a youth of imaginative power but indifferent to fame and class-list distinction, though full of love for good books, and a diligent student of literature on broad and liberal lines, rather than pursuing any one detail of study for special classical or mathematical honours.

He was well liked by his fellow-students, and, unlike many of them, he was very particular about his dress; Dr. Geddes remarked "the radiance of a tartan coat which he wore, the most dazzling affair in dress I ever saw a student wear, but characteristic of the young Celtic minstrel."

He was contemporary with William Geddes, who afterwards became head of the Grammar School, then Professor of Greek, an expert on Homer, and ultimately Sir. W. Geddes, Principal

of the University of Aberdeen, who in later years contributed an article on George Mac Donald's poetry in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

He was also contemporary with Dr. Alexander Roberts, afterwards a professor at St. Andrews, and one of the translators of the Revised Version of the New Testament.

Robert Troup was also a fellow-student. He came from near Huntly, and was educated in the parish school of Rhynie, then at the Grammar School, Aberdeen, from thence to the University, having taken a bursary. After taking his degree Troup went on to Highbury College in 1848. Before finishing his course he was asked to become the colleague of the Rev. John Hill of Huntly, where he remained twenty-eight years and married a cousin of the Mac Donalds', a woman of refined mind and charming character, whom George Mac Donald regarded rather as a sister than as a cousin.

Another of Mac Donald's contemporaries was Robert Spence, who afterwards became Dr. Spence of the "Poultry," London. And for a short time he was with Dr. Legge, missionary, scholar, and Professor of Chinese at Oxford University.

The younger brother, John Hill Mac Donald, came up to the University, and lodged in the same rooms with Mr. Troup. He was then a poet, and when he met with some of his friends for prayer and literary talk and discussion, he would sometimes

read his own verse in lyrics and ballads. He afterwards became a tutor in Russia, and some of his poems are preserved in his brother's novels, and in *The Threefold Cord*. At College he was a youth of great promise and fine character, but of delicate health, and died in 1858. Many of the scenes in *Robert Falconer* are founded on George Mac Donald's experiences in Aberdeen.

Like many other students, he did some work as tutor in private families, and for a short time he was teacher of Latin and English in the then celebrated Boarding Academy of Bellevue for the sons of the gentry preparing for the service of the East India Company.

When Mac Donald was about sixteen he was tutor to two sons of the Rev. W. Grant, Presbyterian minister of Banff. Mr. Grant's brother was parochial schoolmaster at Banchory—one of the good old parson dominies—where George Mac Donald and his pupils often went.

After finishing his University course and taking his M.A. degree in March, 1845, George Mac Donald turned his attention more especially to tuition.

While fulfilling the vocation of teacher, the desire was kindled within him for a higher sphere of more definite religious work, and his heart and mind turned to the Christian ministry; for he was a born preacher, as well as one of nature's poets.

He loved the truth ; every revelation of it was precious. He felt every glimpse of it to be a trust. It burnt within him until he had made it known. The Word of God was to him a message that he must declare. So gradually his whole being turned towards the ministry that gave him the opportunity to preach.

Having been brought up to attend the Congregational Church, because the family was connected with that denomination, and doubtless because it offered more liberty than Presbyterianism, he naturally sought to enter the ministry by the most accessible door.

He probably turned to seek admission to Highbury College, not because of any very strong attachment to Congregational principles, but because it afforded the best means of fulfilling the desire of his heart.

Before entering the Independent College, Highbury, George Mac Donald formed the acquaintance of one James Matheson, then a theological student, who was about his own age. He was born at Durham, and at fourteen had been apprenticed to the late Adam Black, the well-known Edinburgh publisher. There he learnt the love of books, went up to London in 1844, and entered Highbury Independent College, taking his degree in 1848.

A friendship sprang up between these two men that led to the introduction of Mac Donald to

some of Matheson's fellow-students, and more especially to the home-life of the Matheson family, where he became a frequent and beloved guest, winning the affection of the household, and rejoicing the heart of the little girl (now Mrs. Reeves), who sat on the knees of the big, gentle Scotchman. It was in this quiet home of "plain-living and high-thinking" that Mac Donald met Greville Matheson, the brother of James, a clerk in the Bank of England. Both the brothers were remarkable men. Greville Matheson was a poet in heart and soul as well as in verse; and being kindred spirits the two poets grew into close fellowship, which became one of those attachments, full of sacred relationship, that afterwards formed two threads in *The Threefold Cord*.

Mac Donald entered Highbury College in 1848, where he met some of his old friends from Huntly and Aberdeen. While at Highbury, under Dr. Pye Smith and Professor Godwin, the latter discerned the rare mind and poetic nature of the Scotch student, and on one occasion said that "Mac Donald had more poetry in his little finger than all the rest of the men had in their loins." A fellow-student narrates that in the college discussions Mac Donald's speeches were beyond all rivalry in imagination, poetry, and beautiful sentiment, but he did not distinguish himself in logic.

While studying at Highbury College he obtained

a teaching engagement to a family living at "The Retreat," Hammersmith, where some years afterwards he lived.

Before entering Highbury he had met Miss Powell, with whom he fell in love, and although the affection was returned, the course of true love did not run smoothly. The family considered the future prospects of the student-preceptor to be hardly promising enough to justify the engagement. It was during this time of sore trial and heart-testing that Mac Donald wrote the beautiful poem, *Love me, beloved.* It is the true love-song of a deep, intense passion; that is, an exquisite revelation of the two souls concerned. But the outlook is very sad; it is as if they had not much hope of a happy union here on earth.

But Miss Powell had love and insight enough to discern the fine nature and romantic genius of the handsome Highland candidate for the Dissenting Ministry. She accepted him in poverty before he had made his mark, and was content in the great love of a good man and the promise of real intellectual worth and ability. Great was the interest and gladness the Mathesons took in the engagement with Miss Powell, and in the many difficulties which had stood in the way of the lovers, but which love finally conquered.

Having taken his degree at Aberdeen before he came to Highbury, Mac Donald only took the

theological course. So after a little more than a year's study, on receiving an invitation from the Trinity Congregational Church at Arundel, he accepted it, though his college friends did not consider that he was suited for a small country pastorate.

He settled in Arundel in 1850, and soon after his ordination married Miss Powell. Here in this little Sussex town, with its beautiful scenery, under the shadow of its famous castle, two daughters were born. The first was named Lilia Scott, after A. J. Scott, and the second Mary.

George Mac Donald's preaching was not understood by the majority of people. His teaching was too broad, and his views too advanced for the conservative members of his congregation. The kindness and goodness of his character, the generosity of his charity, and his helpfulness to the sick and poor, endeared him as a pastor to the little flock; but, after a ministry of not quite three years, he was quietly told that his preaching was not in harmony with the orthodox beliefs of the members of the church. So he sent in his resignation, and left without any "unpleasantness," taking with him the esteem and love of all who knew him, especially of the members of his Bible-class.

It was while living at Arundel during the winter of 1850–51 that *Within and Without* was

written. And it may be that his first-born daughter Lilia inspired some of the lovely things said about the child Lily in the poem, and suggested the beautiful lyric *Little White Lily*.

The book was not published until 1855, while he was in Manchester. A copy was "given to the Manchester Free Library from the author in grateful acknowledgment of literary aid."

This first volume of poetry Mac Donald published met with a very fair reception. A. J. Scott was one of the first to give it a hearty welcome. It was not only highly appreciated by the friends who knew him, but it gave him the reputation he deserved as a poet. Tennyson and several eminent literary people wrote congratulating him. Among its most ardent admirers was Lady Byron; and through it she formed his acquaintance, that soon ripened into a friendship of great affection that continued while she lived, and to whose memory he dedicated *David Elginbrod*, "with a love stronger than death"; and in the book he pays her this high word of praise:

"The rich easily learn the wisdom of Solomon, but are unapt scholars of Him who is greater than Solomon. It is on the other hand so easy for the poor to help each other, that they have little merit in it: it is no virtue—only a beauty. But there are a few rich who, rivalling the poor in their own peculiar excellences, enter into the kingdom of heaven in spite of their riches; and

then find that by means of their riches they are made rulers over many cities. She to whose memory this book is dedicated is—I will not say was—one of the noblest of such."

Mac Donald's regard for Lady Byron is confirmed again by two short poems. It is perhaps enough to quote one of them—the well-known lines :

TO LADY NOEL BYRON

"Men sought, ambition's thirst to slake,
The lost elixir old
Whose magic touch should instant make
The meaner metals gold.

"A nobler alchemy is thine,
Which love from pain doth press :
Gold in thy hand becomes divine,
Grows truth and tenderness."

After removing from Arundel, where, even in the sunny south, his health had not been robust, and he had broken a blood-vessel, he gave up the idea of seeking another pastorate and turned his attention again to teaching. He had, however, no intention of giving up preaching, which he always felt to be part of his life's vocation, because he had a message to deliver, and a natural gift for the work, that only grew with his understanding of the Book and the unfolding of Divine truth.

After leaving Arundel, in broken health and

with his wife and two children dependent on him, Mac Donald had to live the faith he taught, of dependence on the Heavenly Father's care.

He turned his thoughts to Manchester, where his brother Charles was established in business, and where also his friend A. J. Scott, then Principal of Owens College, was living, and whose acquaintance he had made in London.

The presence of A. J. Scott in Manchester—a man to whom Mac Donald was greatly attracted, and with whom he had much in common—was probably one of the chief reasons which induced him to take up his abode in that commercial centre.

He came to this centre of life and industry in 1853, with the intention of teaching, lecturing, and preaching, as opportunity opened out the way, and settled down with uncertain prospects to make a living as best he could in Cottonopolis. He lived in Camp Street, Broughton, with his wife and two eldest daughters, Lilia and Mary. Here also a son was born named Greville Matheson, after his dear friend.

In Manchester Mac Donald soon became known, and through the introduction of his friend, A. J. Scott, formed many friendships. He was joined by his younger brother John, who was a private tutor, having for one of his pupils the son of Principal A. J. Scott.

His life in Manchester was a time of hard

work, severe trial, and imperfect health, that left its mark upon his life. But his stay was illumined by the kindness of the friends he made, and most of all by his renewed intercourse with A. J. Scott, to whom he owed more than to any man except his father.

CHAPTER II

MANCHESTER FRIENDS

SOMEWHERE in 1849 or the beginning of 1850, probably during the time that Mac Donald was at Highbury College, he heard some lectures given (by a man who had already made his mark in London) at the Marylebone Institute, now the Steinway Hall. This man was A. J. Scott, whom George Mac Donald acknowledged to be the most influential man he ever knew. He recognised at once the remarkable power of this teacher. On being asked, on one occasion, who was the man who had most deeply impressed him of all the people he had known and met, he said, "I have no hesitation in saying A. J. Scott," and all through life he maintained the highest admiration for Scott's intellectual greatness, for his religious influence, and for his powerful charm of character. He implied to a friend that the relation between them was that of master and pupil, rather than of equals.

The acquaintance began with Mac Donald's

enthusiastic appreciation of Scott's lectures, and receiving from Mrs. Scott an invitation to go to their house, which he was obliged to refuse, but said in his reply, "Believe me, very few things taking place between man and man, could give me so much pleasure as Mr. Scott's approbation," and concluded by congratulating him on his appointment to the Principalship of Owens College, Manchester, 1851.

It was doubtless the fact of Mr. Scott's presence in Manchester that formed one of the most attractive inducements for George Mac Donald to go to that city. Every one who came into any kind of relation, felt the bewitching influence and spell of Scott's personality. He won the esteem and regard of all sorts of people. All who knew him recognised the wonderful potency of his character. He was the quintessence of fine influence, felt alike by his students and some of the most distinguished men of his day.

A. J. Scott has been little known in the world of fame, leaving only one small volume of *Discourses*, yet the effect he had on the men who heard and knew him, has been one of the great factors in forming, moulding, and directing the minds and thoughts of those who have most greatly affected the religious intellectual life of the nineteenth century. So slight has been the notice given to this man of influence, that it may not be out of place here to give the little

information that can be gathered concerning him.

Alexander John Scott was born in 1805 at Greenock, being the son of Dr. John Scott, minister of the Middle Church of that town on the Clyde. He was educated at Glasgow University, entering at the early age of fourteen, and leaving when he had taken his degree of M.A. at twenty-one. He went to Edinburgh in 1826, where he first met Thomas Erskine of Linlathen while attending some lectures in the city, and where, also, he was tutor in the family of one of Erskine's friends. Soon after, Scott formed the acquaintance of J. McLeod Campbell, that grew at once into close friendship.

In 1827 he was licensed to become a minister by the Presbytery of Paisley. McLeod Campbell notifies this in a letter to Robert Story : " Sandy Scott is licensed with great approbation ; the old doctor (his father) quite delighted : although there was one of his subjects on which Sandy was led naturally to consider the doctrine in which they differ, and did not think he would be faithful in avoiding it, so did not."

The following Sunday Scott preached for the first time at Row for Campbell, and the next Sunday Campbell heard his friend preach, and said, " I heard him with peculiar delight. His preaching, though only his second Sabbath, was with a sober, solemn composure that would have

seemed a delightful attainment in a man of much experience; the progress he has made in the Divine life, the elevation and clearness of his views, the spirit of love which he breathes in every word, and the single-eyed devotedness to his Master's glory, are to me most delightful illustrations of the power of simple faith."

Such was A. J. Scott's start in life. Scott was again with Mr. Campbell the following summer of 1828, and there met again Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, for whom George Mac Donald had a profound reverence in after days, though he saw little of him personally.

The friendship of these three strong and independent minds, of deep earnest piety, formed a triumvirate that marked an epoch of religious thought.

They were drawn together, arriving by different paths, to many of the same fundamental conclusions. They alike became the persecuted leaders of liberal theology, proclaiming the Love and Fatherhood of God, the universal work of Christ, with the freedom of the influence of the Holy Spirit. For all three, though each pursued his own path with entire liberty, maintained an unbroken regard for one another that death did not change, but prefaced. Each one, in turn, became persecuted for heresy and was expelled, under different circumstances, from the Mother Church they loved.

Scott went to Edinburgh to study medicine, feeling that his views disqualified him for the Presbyterian Church.

It was in the summer of 1828, while staying with Campbell at Row, that Scott first met Edward Irving. Irving formed such a high opinion of him that he invited Scott to London to become his assistant minister and missioner to the poor, on the understanding that he was to be quite free and unfettered in regard to his opinions, a generous concession that reveals how much Irving valued Scott. Irving wrote to his wife, saying: "I was much delighted with Campbell and Sandy Scott, whom I have invited to come with you to London." Writing to Dr. Chalmers a month or two later, Irving says: "Scott is a most precious youth, the finest and strongest faculty for theology I have ever met." Nor did his opinion of him lessen in after days, for in 1830 he wrote of him: "A young man so learned and accomplished in all kinds of discipline I have never met, as pious as he is learned, and of great, very great, discernment of the truth, and faithfulness Godward and manward." This was recorded at the time of their separation. The cause of their parting was on the question of "the tongues."

Irving was entirely carried away with the manifestations. Scott soon felt the movement was *un*healthy, and though it had originated

under his influence, he doubted the genuineness of these utterances as of Divine inspiration. This divergence of opinion was the chief cause that led to the severance of Scott's connection with Irving.

It broke down Scott's health, but did not sever the friendship. Before they parted, Carlyle wrote to his wife: "Irving hauled me off to Lincoln's Inn Fields, to hear my double, Mr. Scott, when I sat directly behind a speakeress with tongues, who, unhappily, did not perform, till after I was gone. My double is more like Maitland, the cotton-eared, I hope, than me, a thin, black-complexioned, vehement man, earnest, clear, and narrow as a tailor's listing."

Both Erskine and Campbell agreed with the position of Scott. Soon after he had ended his work with Irving, which had been chiefly confined to ministry among the poor in Westminster, Scott received an invitation to the Scottish Presbyterian Church at Woolwich, and there he went. But in order to take up the full pastorate he had to be ordained, and this involved a subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which he could not give. The result was a charge of heresy before the Presbytery of Paisley, and he was deprived of his license; the sentence was confirmed by the General Assembly.

After his ejection from the Scottish Church he continued to preach in Woolwich to a small band of devoted hearers. In December, 1845, he went

to Paris because of his health, and on his return continued his ministrations to the little flock. He preached occasionally in Glasgow for his friend McLeod Campbell, who had also been expelled for heresy by the Paisley Synod in 1831.

In 1838 he travelled with Erskine to Switzerland, when he made the acquaintance of Vinet. He also formed the friendship of the Rev. F. D. Maurice, whilst he was chaplain at Guy's Hospital. The acquaintance commenced in 1836, and cemented the friendship between Maurice and Erskine, and for Scott it opened the door to the friendship of Stirling, Sir E. Strachey, Hare, and, through Hare, of Bunsen, and many others. Maurice's love foi Scott increased as they saw more of each other, and drew together in union with Christ. Many letters passed between them.

Maurice attended Scott's lectures, and, in a letter, gives an account of one he heard with Erskine. He says: "The object of the lecture was to show that all service was a progress from the sensible and material to the principle of Powers and of a unity in Powers. The conclusion referred to the discovery of a still higher identification between the God of nature and the God of the spirits. It was very striking as you may suppose. It was pleasant to see so many people one knew who seemed to take an interest in the discourse."

In 1848 Scott was appointed to the Chair of

English Language and Literature in University College, London. There he formed the friendship of Francis Newman, who was one of his fellow-professors. From this position Scott's reputation rose to a wide influence.

After occupying this Lectureship for three years, to the satisfaction of all concerned, he was selected to be the first Principal of Owens College, Manchester, to be Professor of Comparative Grammar, English Language and Literature, Logic, and Mental and Moral Philosophy. He came to Manchester with many recommendations from men of mark. It was in Manchester that he did some of his best work, not only in lecturing to the students and taking a class in the morning on the New Testament in Greek, but in continuing, in the evening, classes and lectures for working men, as he had done in Woolwich, assisted by other members of the staff. The outcome of this effort was the Manchester Working-men's College, in the establishment of which the Rev. W. Gaskell took part.

Scott helped to lay down the policy of a high and broad system of education, which has become the foundation upon which the present University of Manchester has grown up. He was a physically strong man, but the strain of heavy work told on him; his health began to fail after frequent breakdowns.

All his lectures were delivered extemporane-

ously. He seldom wrote and read them. They came from the fulness of his knowledge, and the powerful grasp his mind took of the subjects he dealt with.

When the Manchester Free Library was opened in 1852, it was Scott who suggested the first series of lectures.

After six years' service at Owens College he resigned, owing to ill health, his position as Principal, to the great regret of his staff, but continued his duties as a Professor.

A resolution was passed by his colleagues expressing appreciation of his work, and of " their strong sense of the kindly and courteous manner in which he had always co-operated with his colleagues." He continued to lecture, though he suffered much from severe headaches, that often incapacitated him for conversation or any mental exertion.

In 1860 the past students presented to the authorities of the College a marble bust of Scott, an excellent likeness by the sculptor, Mr. H. S. Leifchild.

It was an honourable and worthy expression of gratitude that was received by Professor Greenwood, then Principal of Owens College, and the immediate successor of Scott. At the gathering many friends of Scott were present, when sincere words of admiration were spoken by Mr. J. A. Picton and others.

In 1865 Scott was obliged to seek a change, and went to Switzerland, hoping to return benefited. He spent the winter on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, but his stay 'mid lovely scenes did not restore his health. Tended by all that love and care could do, he passed on into the perfect life at the age of sixty, and was buried at Clarens.

Over his grave the record runs: "A. J. Scott, M.A., died at Veytaux, January 12th, 1866. 'If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine.'—John vii. 17. 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life, and in Thy presence is fulness of joy.' —Psalm xvi. 11."

After he was at rest many tributes of praise were borne to the man who made no effort to make himself famous, but did everything to create a good influence. Testimony came from many quarters, bearing witness to the greatness and the beauty of his life and character.

To the inner circle of friends the loss was irreparable. Erskine says: "To me it appears a merciful release of a wonderful prisoner, whose life for long has been a painful struggle. No man whom I have known has impressed me more than Scott, and I have always received unchanging love from him."

McLeod Campbell, in a letter to Miss Ker, who was sister-in-law to A. J. Scott, says: "I am

most thankful for the help to faith in God which *his manifested faith* must be to you, for this faith is your ultimate resource. Truly, he is one of the cloud of witnesses—witnesses to God's faithfulness: while you may hear him still, as I heard him once in preaching, directing you to *the one perfect witness*, Jesus, 'the Author and Finisher of our faith.' One of his early sermons at Greenock was from the words, 'I have given Him a witness to the people,' a witness witnessing for God in contradiction to all men's distrust and suspicions and hard thoughts of God. I may say to you that when I got dear Mrs. Scott's letter, sent through Mr. Erskine (who accompanied it by a few most comforting words of love), the thought of my departed friend that came before me with solemn peace was, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' This aspect of what I knew him took entire and exclusive possession of me for a time, and was to me what the words 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' were to her at the grave"—alluding to the effect of a burst of sunshine which occurred when these words were spoken at the funeral.

Campbell says in a letter to his son, "The clear apprehension of the love of God as God's revelation of Himself to every man in the Atonement was my salvation, and also my beloved Mr. Scott's salvation."

It was the religious position taken up by

Erskine, Campbell, and Scott that drew Mac Donald into spiritual union with all three, but especially with A. J. Scott, who was by far the most powerful in mind and intellect.

Daniel Macmillan's appreciation of Scott was keen and enthusiastic. "He is, I think, second to few men of our time or any time."

Archdeacon Hare spoke in warmest terms.

F. D. Maurice looked up to Scott with veneration, as one of the makers of thought and one of the foremost teachers.

But no one understood him better, or valued him as a friend and teacher more highly, than Mac Donald. If there were no other tribute left to his memory, the noble dedication in *Robert Falconer* has made Scott a famous man to thousands who otherwise would not have heard his name: "To the memory of the man who stands highest in the oratory of my memory, Alexander John Scott, I, daring, presume to dedicate this book."

The first of the *Organ Songs* is addressed to A. J. Scott:

"I walked all night: the darkness did not yield.
Around me fell a mist, a weary rain,
Enduring long. At length the dawn revealed

"A Temple's front, high-lifted from the plain.
Closed were the lofty doors that led within;
But by a wicket one might entrance gain.

" 'Twas awe and silence when I entered in ;
The night, the weariness, the rain were lost
In hopeful spaces. First I heard a thin

" Sweet sound of voices low together tossed,
As if they sought some harmony to find
Which they knew once ; but none of all that host

" Could wile the far-fled music back to mind.
Loud voices, distance-low, wandered along
The pillared paths, and up the arches twined

" With sister arches, rising, throng on throng
Up to the roof's dim height. At broken times
The voices gathered to a burst of song,

" But parted sudden, and were but single rimes
By single bells through Sabbath morning sent,
That have no thought of harmony or chimes.

" Hopeful confusion ! Who could be content,
Looking and hearkening from the distant door ?
I entered further. Solemnly it went—

" Thy voice, Truth's herald, walking the untuned roar,
Calm and distinct, powerful and sweet, and fine :
I loved and listened, listened and loved more.

" May not the faint harp, tremulous, combine
Its ghost-like sounds with organ's mighty tone ?
Let my poor song be taken into thine.

" Will not thy heart, with tempests of its own,
Yet hear æolian sighs from thin chords blown ? "

Again to A. J. Scott :

" When, long ago, the daring of my youth
Drew nigh thy greatness, with a little thing
Thou didst receive me : and thy sky of truth

"Has domed me since, a heaven of sheltering,
Made homely by the tenderness and grace
Which round thy absolute friendship ever fling

"A radiant atmosphere. Turn not thy face
From that small part of earnest thanks, I pray,
Which, spoken, leaves much more in speechless case.

"I see thee far before me on thy way
Up the great peaks and striding stronger still;
Thy intellect unrivalled in its sway,

"Upheld and ordered by a regnant will;
Thy wisdom, seer and priest of holy fate,
Searching all truth its prophecy to fill.

"But this my joy: throned in thy heart so great
High Love is queen, and sits without a mate."

Dr. Hunter, in a lecture delivered on A. J. Scott, quoted a letter received from Mr. J. A. Picton, who speaks of A. J. Scott as "one of the greatest intellects I ever knew, though he was and will remain, a puzzle. The suggestions of limitless power in his lectures seemed altogether falsified when he took to writing." In the same lecture Dr. Hunter read a letter from George Mac Donald on A. J. Scott, in which he says:

"It was in Owens College I listened to Mr. Scott expounding deep truths with an eloquence so real, being inspired by the truth, that my heart burned within me. I never brought a difficulty to him, metaphysical or practical, but I found the help I needed, and I should have been perplexed to decide which to wonder at the more—

the clearness of vision for the perception of simple truth, or the acuteness and accuracy of the analysis by which he conveyed his perception to others—had not a remarkable union of the two absorbed the wonder in itself. He seemed to me, to construct bridges of metaphysical argument, bound and cemented by logic, across chasms to distant heights, which are first perceived only by the eye of the poet, and first visited only by the faith of the prophet. And all that he said derived a new and superior value from the accompanying conviction of the unity of his own inner life—a conviction that could not fail to be produced in the minds of all who were capable of forming an idea. . . . I know no such powerful influence for the preservation of faith and reverence in young men till such time as these feelings shall rest on direct personal acquaintance with truth, as the assurance that such a man as Alexander John Scott believed and worshipped. . . . These reminiscences may help you to realise what I thought and think of the man—the greatest I have known, if I may use a form which implies a power of judging which I do not possess. It only means—so it seems to me——"

Scott took a great interest in Mazzini and the band of Italian heroes and liberators. He met Saffie when he visited England, and had a great admiration, that in time became a friendship, for Ruffini.

The two men who most affected A. J. Scott were Dr. Chalmers and Coleridge. Among his friends were Ary Scheffer, Ruskin, Kingsley, Francis Newman, and Fanny Kemble, who says, in her *Recollections*, that her intercourse with Mr. Scott was most delightful. " He is nearly as good as a man can be. One of the most influential persons I have ever known, in the strongest sense of the word. He affected the minds of all who came across him, and his influence, like all the deepest and most powerful human influence, was personal."

It is not surprising that such a man should imbed himself in the heart and mind of Mac Donald, whose soul was always ready to love the highest, nor is it to be wondered that Scott, being what he was, should discern the genius of Mac Donald, and take him to his heart with grappling hooks of steel.

During Mac Donald's stay in the city of Manchester he formed a friendship with Henry Septimus Sutton, a man and poet of very high character, and great beauty of soul, with a tender, gentle spirit, and a singularly modest and retiring disposition. A man of great personal charm, with a deeply religious nature and of fine spiritual insight, and withal of simple, unworldly tastes, but of marked individuality and rare intellectual gifts ; a singer of no mean order, who lived

the songs he sang. No appreciation of George Mac Donald would be complete that did not give a place to one whom he delighted to love and honour, and always spoke of with great admiration and exquisite affection.

Among Mac Donald's hearers of a course of lectures, delivered in a room in Radnor Street, Manchester, to a small audience, of never more than twenty, was Henry Septimus Sutton, then a young man not twenty-five, who had come from Nottingham, where he had been trained for the medical profession, but after a short time of study had abandoned the healing art for the work of literature in the employ of journalism. He had published a small volume of poems that had attracted the attention of Emerson, so that when the famous American visited Manchester in 1847, he invited Mr. Sutton to visit him at his lodgings. Some previous contributions to *The Truth-Seeker*, then under the care of Dr. Lees and G. T. Phillips, had aroused interest. Mr. Ireland sought his acquaintance, and in 1853, through the influence of Mr. Ireland, Mr. Sutton was appointed chief of *The Manchester Examiner and Times* reporting staff.

The following year was published *Quinquenergia, or Proposals for a new Practical Theology*, that greatly delighted Bronson Alcott, who said the book combined the sense of William Law with the subtlety of Behman and the piety of Pascal,

When Mr. Sutton joined the Swedenborgians, this book was withdrawn, but not before Professor Francis Newman had given a copy to Miss Frances Power Cobbe, that became her constant companion for many years.

She introduced it to Fanny Kemble, who greatly valued the poems.

Martineau said: "*Rose's Diary* has long been to me as the presence of a tender and faithful friend." Christina Rossetti so much admired the poet's work that she introduced Francis Palgrave to a knowledge of the book. Also a close and intimate friendship was formed with Coventry Patmore that was continued until his death.

Other men of note—Mr. W. J. Linton and Mr. Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*, and Faed the artist—realised the genius in the man, and George Mac Donald soon discovered the soul of poetry in the hearer of his lectures.

Rose's Diary now the best known of Mr. Sutton's work, reveals the deep religious nature, with the delicate, quaint, spiritual power of verse full of insight into the realm of mystical philosophy.

Mr. Sutton possessed a great gift for poetic discernment and criticism. His talk was always of the best things, and to hear him read his own verse was a rare and delightful experience. The sweet, earnest voice, with fine sympathetic

tone that lent intense feeling and illumination, gave an added charm to the poems that is indescribable. After Mr. Sutton joined the New Church he became an enthusiastic Church worker, and often preached as a layman in the church with which he was connected.

At the time that Mac Donald came to know Henry Sutton, he was the editor of *The United Kingdom Alliance* weekly paper, which appointment he had just accepted, being an ardent temperance reformer, a man of broad sympathy with enlightened views, deeply interested in social questions and all that affected the moral and intellectual well-being of the nation.

These two men, although different in many ways, had very much in common. Both rank among the select few who see the things that are eternal; both were mystic poets who looked through the garments of flesh and sense to behold the abiding realities within and beyond. Though the friendship, after the departure of Mac Donald from Manchester, was not renewed often by personal contact and intercourse, yet it grew on in silence; time and absence made no difference to the spontaneous, intuitive affection and sympathy. These two men flew into each other's hearts almost at once, and as naturally as, after many years of physical separation, they fell, with the joy of children, into each other's arms.

Their friendship had a fine, broad base of common religious life, with similar pleasures and delights, and with that perfect understanding and trust which neither time nor change, place nor circumstance could alter, except to increase. Any one privileged to see them together had a beautiful and pathetic memorial of affection to treasure for the rest of life.

Although these friends had so much in common, there was much also that was *un*common to each. Their religious standpoint far removed, nevertheless they grew apart to see together in spiritual things with wonderful harmony.

Sutton, though with a bright, happy disposition, was more of the ascetic—a prophet, but after the call of John the Baptist, a vegetarian, and a staunch abstainer. Deep fires lay burning within which kindled and glowed and flamed forth, sometimes with fiery eloquence and zeal for politics.

Mac Donald "came eating and drinking," and was more the high-priest of culture, the æsthetic prophet with the wide, far-reaching interest in men, and a keen sense of humour.

Another friend that Mac Donald made whilst in Manchester was the Rev. George Burden Bubier, who was then Congregational minister of Hope Chapel, Salford, and afterwards Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Springhill College. He was a friend of Miss Mary Russell Mitford, and of Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, before she

was married. He was literary editor of *The Nonconformist* in its palmy days, when Edward Miall was its leading spirit. Mr. Bubier was a remarkably able man, and a thoughtful preacher, who attracted a large and influential congregation. In the Bubiers' home Mac Donald was a constant and welcome visitor, and his brother Charles a valued friend.

It was in the close intercourse between Bubier and Mac Donald that the idea arose of compiling a hymn-book suitable for young people, a need greatly felt at that time. Bubier, undoubtedly, did the greater part of the work of gathering and collecting the hymns most appropriate for Sunday School use. Of this little volume of three hundred and eighteen hymns, twenty-four were fresh and original. Five of these were by Bubier and ten by Mac Donald. The set on the Beatitudes has never been republished, except the one "Blessed are the meek"; but some of the others have now become well known. The Sunday morning hymn, "Father, I well may praise Thy Name," and the evening hymn, "Daylight fades away," and the one—

> "A quiet heart, submissive, meek,
> Father, do Thou bestow,
> Which more than granted will not seek
> To have or give or know,"

which is often clipped of some of its sweetest verses, are among Mac Donald's best hymns.

But the collection unfortunately does not contain one of the best of evening hymns in the language, and certainly one of Mac Donald's sweetest, probably because it was not composed until after the book was published.

"Oh God, whose daylight leadeth down
Into the sunless way,
Who with restoring sleep dost crown
The labours of the day.

"What I have done, Lord, make it clean
With Thy forgiveness dear,
That so to-day what might have been
To-morrow may appear.

"And when my thought is all astray,
Yet think Thou on in me,
That with the new-born, stainless day
My soul rise fresh and free.

"Nor let me wander all in vain
Through dreams that mock and flee,
But e'en in visions of the brain
Go wandering on toward Thee."

Besides the morning and evening hymns there is one on noontide, making a triplet of complete harmony.

This little book, entitled *Hymns and Sacred Songs, for Sunday School and Social Worship*, was first published in 1858.

It was well received, and supplied a large demand, continuing in circulation, chiefly in Congregational Sunday Schools, up to the time of Mr. Bubier's death in 1869.

Long after Mr. Bubier passed away, his wife, a woman of many gifts and saintly piety, used to refer to the happy relations that existed between her husband and George Mac Donald, and the bond of union that the children's hymn-book had cemented.

In Manchester Mac Donald came to know another interesting and original mind, the Rev. Watson Smith, who had come to the Longsight Congregational Church. He was a man of broad thought and scientific mind, of fine and delicate feeling, with a great love of nature and music. He was not a popular preacher, but greatly prized by those who loved and understood him. Mac Donald highly appreciated the man and his message, and was not an infrequent hearer in his morning congregation.

Dr. Halley was at Cavendish at this time, and once the doctor asked Mac Donald to preach for him, though he complained that the young people of his flock were going off to hear Mac Donald when he preached on Sunday evenings in the room in Renshaw Street, then called "The Carpenters' Hall."

Mac Donald also gave lectures on literature, which were sometimes delivered in private drawing-rooms. The Behrens opened their home for a course that was very successful.

At Bolton also, for some little time, he lectured

and preached. Whether he would have been able to establish himself firmly there, or make his work remunerative enough to be worth while making the "Cotton City" his permanent home, so as to become identified with its life, is difficult to say. He never got acclimatised to its atmosphere, and being delicate when he came, the severe strain on his health and strength at last broke him down, and he was obliged to fly to warmer regions, after being in Manchester for about three years—from 1853-6. The life in the city of smoke and rain told upon him, and in spite of the many friends his gifts and his charms had won for him, the struggle to make both ends meet had been too much, so that after a serious attack of hæmorrhage he went to Devonshire and afterwards to Algiers.

Mac Donald gives a picture of his impression of Manchester in one of his road-side poems, called *A Manchester Poem.*

He describes a typical day in the chimneyed city—a drizzly, smoke-begrimed, cloudy morning wherein a man and a woman go forth to their labour in the factory. There the murky day is spent, 'mid the dust and noise of "swift-revolving wheels."

At length the clanking of the looms is still, and evening calls home the toilers through

Lancashire scenery of dull streets to their dreary home surrounded by—

"Earth heaps and broken bricks and muddy pools."

The room is lighted by a bright fire, and after a wash of pure water they sit to their evening meal:

"To eat their Eucharist: for to the heart
That reads the live Will in the dead command
He is the Bread, yea all, of every meal."

As they sit in weary rest, the strong moonlight outside casts shadows on the window-blind; they go out and see the night sky clear, giving promise of a fine day.

When they wake on the following Sunday morning, the moon is still in the heavens. A woman in a red cloak goes down the street, giving a dash of colour. Then the husband and wife sally forth for a walk into the fields beyond the city.

The spring is coming, the grass is growing green, and the simple bit of nature that is theirs to rejoice in, is beautifully described. On their way they pass a ruined cottage, with a desolate bit of garden, wherein "a simple snowdrop drooped its snowy drop," and it awakens in their hearts a heavenly response. On this little flower the poet dwells with tenderness and grace. With careful hands the toilers uproot the flower, and

bring it home to be a messenger of loveliness and peace. Then—

"Weary and hopeful to their sleep they go;
And all night long the snowdrop glimmers white,
Thinning the darkness, unknowing it and unseen."

The poet wakes from his dream and goes out far into the country, and enters Nature's Church, and finds communion with the heart of spring, to seek delight in simplest common things, and learns the lesson that—

"High hope is more than deepest joy,
A disappointment better than a feast,
And the first daisy on a wind-swept lea
Dearer than Eden groves with rivers four."

The reader is then left alone to feel the infinite contrast between the city life for thousands and thousands, and the rare solitude of an isolated soul, that finds fellowship and blessedness in the ministry of one flower.

CHAPTER III

REMINISCENCES

MAC DONALD returned, after his stay in Algiers, to settle in Hastings, where he remained for three years. Then he came to London,—teaching and writing in order to provide the means of living,—to find that *Within and Without* had been recognised and highly appreciated by a few thoughtful people. It introduced him to literary society, and gave him many friends. While in London he lived first at a house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, then at Tudor Lodge, Regent's Park, and for some time at No. 12, Earl's Terrace, Kensington.

In 1857 Mac Donald published a volume of poems, dedicated to his father, that did not awaken great interest beyond those who knew him.

The first prose book came out the following year, and was called *Phantastes, a Faerie Romance*, and so it is in very truth.

The changes are endless : the forest, the stream, the strange palace, the shadow that comes and

goes, and only vanishes when the narrator has proved himself a hero, and the mystic story of *The Magic Glass*—all give introduction to a wonderland that is everywhere touching on a spiritual world of truth. Nothing more light and airy, more weird and fanciful, is to be found in the realm of fairy stories than the adventures of Anodos.

Some of the passages in *Phantastes* are equal to anything Mac Donald has written. The story holds the germs and seeds of all the after teaching that is to be found in his later books. Much of it is poetry in prose, as, for instance, this comment on the sweet song that had a note of sorrow in it : "We do not know how much of the pleasures even of life we owe to the intermingled sorrow. Joy cannot unfold the deepest truths, although deepest truth must be deepest joy. Cometh white-robed Sorrow, stooping and wan, and flingeth wide the doors she may not enter. Almost we linger with sorrow for very love."

Some of the verse in the story will live even beyond the prose. Often is this fragment quoted :

"Alas, how easily things go wrong !
A sigh too much or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain
And life is never the same again.

"Alas, how hardly things go right !
'Tis hard to watch in a summer night,
For the sigh will come and the kiss will stay,
And the summer night is a winter day."

The next book to appear was *David Elginbrod*, which at first went the round of the publishers, but was declined with thanks. Probably the Scotch was too broad, and the tone too religious. It was not until Mrs. Oliphant and Miss Young had expressed their surprise to a publisher that the MS. had been rejected—"for any one was a fool to miss the sale of such a story"—that the book appeared in 1863, and became a great success.

The large sale of this book gave Mac Donald a good position as an author, and he became known and recognised as one of our popular novelists. The story made its mark, and the author rose to fame.

In London, during his residence in Mornington Crescent, he knew the Brownings well, and in 1862 gave lectures on Mrs. Browning's poetry, and afterwards on her husband's. The Mac Donalds sometimes attended the same Congregational church as the Brownings, and listened to the preaching of the Rev. Thomas Jones, and occasionally, at the little iron church, they heard the Rev. Thomas Lynch, for whom Mac Donald had a great admiration. But he was a regular hearer of Rev. F. D. Maurice, less frequently at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, and constantly at St Peter's, Vere Street.

His handsome face and gifts of speech gave him ready access to the best society, and when

living at Queen Square, the family entertained many interesting people in simple and often unconventional fashion.

Every one who loved books and good talk, and the best things, came to him. And among the distinguished people he came to know were Tennyson, Carlyle, Maurice, Lord Houghton, Lord and Lady Mount Temple, Mrs. Russell Gurney, and hosts of others.

Mac Donald's publisher, Mr. Strahan, with whom he was on most friendly terms, introduced him to many literary people, some of whom became true and lasting friends.

It was at his house at Blackheath that Mac Donald and his wife met Mr. Japp, who gives several interesting glimpses of the poet. He says he once saw Mac Donald in conversation with Swinburne, and the two poets presented a great contrast. Allingham also spoke of meeting Mac Donald and Swinburne, with others, at breakfast at Lord Houghton's, and mentioned the interesting contrast the poets presented.

Mr. Japp refers to the performance of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, that seemed like a revival of the old miracle plays, and the touching way in which George Mac Donald, as Greatheart, led the trembling pilgrims to the verge of the river beyond which lay the Eternal City. It was rendered especially pathetic by the death of several members of the family, of whom one

could not but be reminded when Greatheart led the pilgrims to the brink of the river.

Also, Mr. Japp mentions that a distinguished Churchman objected to one of the lectures at Queen's College, London, being given by Mac Donald, because he preached in Nonconformist churches, and suggested that he should give up preaching. Mac Donald indignantly repudiated the idea, declaring that he looked upon his preaching as his noblest work, when the matter was dropped.

Alec Forbes came out in 1865, and greatly added to and widened Mac Donald's reputation; and although his health was delicate, he worked hard at writing, teaching, and lecturing, with wonderful zeal. *Alec Forbes* was followed by *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*, and the simple but beautiful story of *Guild Court*.

In 1868 *Robert Falconer* appeared, which established and confirmed his position as a novelist. The same year was published *The Seaboard Parish* and *England's Antiphon*.

The three stories *David Elginbrod*, *Alec Forbes*, and *Robert Falconer* won for themselves a numerous and appreciative audience, and placed the author in the front rank of story-tellers, and among the seers of nature and lovers of all sorts and conditions of human life. Above all, Mac Donald made a name, without seeking fame, as

a true religious teacher, a man with a message concerning the Love and Fatherhood of God, that for many of his readers was a new revelation which brought freedom from the bondage of old-fashioned theology, and was a spiritual deliverance to the souls of many.

The reading of *Robert Falconer* awakened a new interest for work among the poor. It turned the hearts of many to the slums of London, and sent one young student to begin a ministry where the need of Christian work was great—in the East End of the mighty city.

On February 29th, 1868, the University of Aberdeen conferred on Mac Donald the honorary degree of LL.D., in recognition of his literary work.

Mac Donald's understanding of child-life had been fully revealed in the clear portrayal of the early days of Robert Falconer and Shagar; in the childhood of Alec Forbes and Annie Anderson; and in Hugh's pupil Harry in *David Elginbrod*, so that it was a good omen for *Good Words for the Young* when he, with Norman MacLeod, undertook the editorship of that magazine.

Mac Donald exercised a fascinating influence over the young. Miss Annie Matheson, the poetess, daughter of Mac Donald's friend the Rev. James Matheson, of Nottingham, and niece of Greville Matheson, said that George Mac Donald

was, next to her own father, the greatest inspiration in the visible world in her childhood and early girlhood.

When she was about nine he would draw the shy, old-fashioned child to his fatherly presence, and bid her whisper the little rhymes she had made, till her heart was in a very rapture of adoring gratitude. It was not only that his presence was beautiful and came nearer outwardly to the vision of Christ than anything that her heart had dreamed before, but also that his exquisite courtesy to children made them feel in an instant that their truest and best self was understood and loved by him, and treated with exactly the same reverence and sympathy as a grown-up soul. The visits were not very frequent, but they were looked forward to as great events, full of the most heavenly joy. He never came without renewing the first gentle confidences about the tiny childish scraps that had been written in the interval.

When Miss Matheson was twelve he made her say to him the hymn that she had written since the last visit, then asked that he might take it and show it to his friend and publisher, Mr. Strahan. At his next visit he handed the little authoress two guineas, that Mr. Strahan had given him for her on its publication, bringing the first earnings with almost the same pleasure that they were received. But what was valued by

the child of those days, even more than the gold, was the wonderful sympathy with her own inarticulate inner life.

A Sunday School child in the gallery, after listening to an address from him in Friars' Lane Chapel, Nottingham, said, "O teacher, he's just like Jesus."

When Miss Matheson was at boarding-school in London, Mrs. Mac Donald often asked her to spend her monthly holiday with them. The whole household possessed for her a magnetic, enchanting attraction, and especially was she drawn to the two eldest girls.

A word of reproof, for some act of carelessness, uttered by Mac Donald to one of his children, made a great impression on the visitor. Until then, he had seemed to her so entirely the incarnation of gentleness, that she says she had not fully realised the force which lay behind it, and which formed so large a part of his power.

With the success of the stories the Mac Donald family removed to "The Retreat," on the Upper Mall, Hammersmith, the house that was afterwards taken by William Morris, who called it Kelmscott House. It was just the home for a poet. The house is situated on the banks of the Thames. From the windows a magnificent view of the river is obtained, and behind is a large old-fashioned garden with beautiful lawn and trees.

Here the circle of friends was much enlarged, and among these friends were the Burne-Joneses. Mrs. Burne-Jones afterwards stayed with the Mac Donalds for six weeks at Bordighera, and she says in her husband's *Life* that "their kindness made it seem as if Allingham must have been right, and I *was* a member of the family." He thought that, as her name had been Mac Donald, she was therefore a sister to the novelist. While she was at Bordighera, Burne-Jones wrote to his wife, "Give my love to my brothers the Mac Donalds, and my sister the Sunlight, and my mother the Blue."

It was at "The Retreat" that the juvenile tales were dramatised by Mrs. Mac Donald, and acted by herself and the children, Lily showing a distinct talent for histrionic art. Mac Donald believed in the growing reform of the stage and the elevation of the public taste by the introduction of pure plays performed by actors of high character.

Once when talking to a friend about the stage and its improving condition, he regretted how much some Christian people lost by not going to the theatre.

When the American Jubilee Singers visited England, they came and sang in his garden, and his kindness won all their hearts.

Many interesting American people came to see him. Mark Twain was among the number.

His lecturing tour in America, 1872–3, was a great success. Already, long before he thought of visiting the States, he had a great many admirers, who waited his coming with great gladness, and gave him a hearty welcome when he arrived.

One of the chief pleasures of the whole pilgrimage was making the personal acquaintance and friendship of the poet Whittier, with whom he stayed, and of whom he always spoke in terms of much affection. He left behind him, in Boston and Concord, a deep and lasting impression. A friend, following in his wake, some years afterwards, found the Americans high in their praise of him and his work and influence, and this even among the conservative religious people.

Spending a day with Mrs. Jackson, sister-in-law to Emerson, the friend discovered that among the many distinguished guests who had called or visited them, Mac Donald had won a special place. The daughter, talking of the famous men who had passed and gone on their way, said :

> "The lightning and thunder,
> They go and they come ;
> But the stars and the stillness
> Are always at home."

Such had been Mac Donald's influence.

In quick succession appeared the children's stories, *At the Back of the North Wind*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, and *Ranald Bannerman's*

Boyhood, to be followed a little later by *Gutta Percha Willie*.

About this time, in 1873–4, Mac Donald came to lecture on *Hamlet* to the students at Cheshunt College. Dr. H. R. Reynolds presided. There was a large audience, and among those present was Mrs. Ellis of Broxbourne, the wife of the missionary who had laboured so long and so well in Madagascar, and authoress of *The Daughters of England* and other books, an interesting woman, and greatly gifted in conversation.

She had known Mac Donald for some time, he having been a lecturer at the school for young ladies which formerly she had kept, with marked success.

At the close of the College lecture, Mrs. Ellis asked Mac Donald to come and see her again at Rose Cottage, where she then lived. She said, "You must come this summer, when the roses are in bloom, and not delay very long, for I am getting an old woman, and we cannot tell what changes may take place in the course of the year.

He looked at her with his kindest smile, and eyes full of light, and taking her hand in his, said slowly, in a gracious and pathetic tone, with a broad Scotch accent: "Na, na, some of us live sae near heaven it will be no *change* at all—just ganging Hame."

For her the words were beautifully true, and the prophecy was shortly fulfilled.

In the year 1877 Mac Donald received the Civil List pension of £100 a year, to the gratification of his friends.

Arthur Hughes, who at this time was illustrating some of his books, first saw Mac Donald in 1857. He says: "I always think of him as poet and preacher inseparably combined, but only once *heard* him preach—so frank and open, always receiving impressions and ever communicating them, full of enthusiasm and high spirits, and endless love."

Mr. Hughes remembers the delightful little plays, given by the children under Mrs. Mac Donald's direction, full of refinement and fun.

"An accidental call would find Mac Donald bending over his son and the Latin books, with heaps of his own work going on—the classes to visit, the lectures to get up and deliver in all weathers in spite of delicate health, the books to keep going, with monthly chapters for the magazine. As his illustrator in *Good Words for the Young*, I saw something of the wearing pressure of the work, and also of the happy relief he obtained sometimes from the wealth of his own beautiful poetic powers, that would insist upon having expression, 'for when he was tired by his prose he rested by taking to his wings,' as Mrs. Mac Donald said. One feels how much he must have enjoyed those playful poetical ramblings that break the text of *The Back of the North*

Wind, for this charming story was done at a very harassing period of life, 1871."

For more than twenty years Mac Donald made Casa Coraggio his home at Bordighera. Being obliged to winter in a warmer climate, he built a new house in this picturesque little town on the shores of the Italian Riviera.

The house was large, and the family was able to receive many guests, and to provide a centre for giving pleasure and instruction to many friends and passing strangers.

Wednesday afternoons were kept for pleasant " at homes," when Mac Donald gave readings from the poets and talks on Dante and literary subjects. Sunday evening services were regularly held, and an address or sermon given.

Mrs. Brookfield, in her *Sketch of George Mac Donald at Bordighera*, says, " The purpose of all the gatherings was not to amuse people, but only to help them." The large room where these interesting meetings were held could comfortably accommodate two hundred seated, and frequently it was crowded. Here also dramatic representations were given.

Mac Donald's life here, as it was wherever he lived, became the practical exhibition of the helpful charity he preached and taught. It was a continual benediction to the poor and needy among the residents, and a constant ministry to the sick and distressed. Advice and assistance

were denied to none who sought, be they friends or strangers. He sought the friendless and distressed, not the rich and distinguished; it was the poor and needy that were the objects of his care and affection. And thus he won, by quiet and beautiful love for his neighbour, the respect and honour of Catholic and Protestant.

He once told a friend how, at the request of his Italian gardener, he stood as godfather at the christening of his child in the Catholic church, and kissed the cross, feeling that baptism was the recognition of the baby's place in the Father's family, and the kiss of the Church was the little one's welcome into the Good Shepherd's fold.

While at Bordighera a large amount of literary work was done. Almost half his stories were written at Casa Coraggio.

In 1883 *The Threefold Cord* appeared. More than sixty of the poems were composed by Mac Donald, twenty-two by Greville Matheson, and the rest by John Hill Mac Donald. Both the friend and the brother had passed away before the book was published, but it forms a lasting memorial to the bonds of love that cannot be severed.

Mac Donald continued working at his lectures, which he gave as opportunity occurred; but as he was only in England during the summer months, the lecturing was much restricted, and often crowded into many consecutive nights in

September before returning to the winter home in October.

The subjects he lectured on during the "eighties" were—

1. *Hamlet.*
2. *King Lear.*
3. *Macbeth.*
4. *Julius Cæsar.*
5. *Merchant of Venice.*
6. "A Talk about Dante."
7. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*
8. *In Memoriam.*
9. "Poetry, illustrated from Tennyson's Lyrics."
10. "Shelley."
11. "Wordsworth."
12. "Burns."

A friend with whom at this time he occasionally stayed, during these lecturing tours, remembers with grateful gladness some of the talks; how enthusiastically he spoke of men and books; of Stevenson and his stories, in the early days of his writing, before his star was much above the horizon. Once, before leaving for a long train journey, he asked his friend to inquire if the new story by Stevenson was out. On its being brought from the bookstall, he took the volume in his hands with the glee of a schoolboy, saying: "Now I shall have a pleasant journey."

He spoke with keen appreciation of Watts,

Burne-Jones, and Rossetti, and speaking of the latter's picture, "Dante's Dream," the friend asked him if he thought that by the two stairways, the one leading up to the light with the red dove descending, and the other leading down to where the passing-bell hangs in dimness, Rossetti meant to indicate that these are the only two exits from the chamber of death for all the sorrowing.

"Most certainly," said MacDonald. "Looking at a picture is just like looking at a flower or a landscape. You cannot see what isn't there, and what you do see must have its purpose."

He spoke in praise of Swinburne, and much of Browning, and said that before *The Ring and the Book* was published, Browning showed him the MS. and remarked, "People say I am obscure. Now there is nothing difficult here; this is a simple story."

On one occasion, when talking about present-day English singers, George Mac Donald was loud in the praise of Swinburne, especially of his lyric power. Some one made a depreciative observation or criticism, when Mac Donald said something to this effect: "You must remember some of his best songs were 'before sunrise.' Think what a singer he will be when for him the 'Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.'"

He had a great good word to say of Arthur Hughes and Frederick Shields, of whom Rossetti

had said to him that "Shields was a true Christian artist; I think the truest of modern days."

In his talks on spiritual things he was at his best. Once he said:

"We could owe nothing to ourselves. The one great business in life was just doing the Father's Will; no one ever had any cause to be in a hurry; there was always plenty of time both to learn it and do it, for life here was only the beginning of existence."

Another time he quoted Aubrey de Vere's line with great feeling, "No man is wholly theist save the saint."

In a long and deep talk on the sin against the Holy Ghost, he said that he thought it was possible so to resist the Holy Spirit's influence that it might become a permanent state, for none could be forgiven whilst hardening their hearts and rejecting Divine love and grace, but probably the sin was not *actually* committed, because the conditions in the life beyond would ultimately arrest the hardest hearts. For if it continued it must limit the final restoration, and that was to him an impossible thought, for God must be all in all."

He often spoke of A. J. Scott as the greatest man he had known, and of the help and encouragement he gave him when most sorely in need of it, and gratefully acknowledged Scott's keen appreciation of *Phantastes*. He mentioned that

while Scott was with Irving, he influenced the famous preacher so much as quite to transform some of his views. Scott always believed that there was something in the gift of tongues—the rudiments of a universal language. He mentioned, too, that Scott said the flaw in Irving was, that he believed organisation could produce life, whilst Scott maintained that life alone could produce organisation.

He spoke of one dear to him who was slowly dying of consumption, as "crossing one of the bridges to the other country; and if she went first, they would only see more of her, and not less."

To one whose father and mother were both in heaven, he said, "It will be nice to have them both welcome you."

In August, 1895, this friend made a call on George Mac Donald whilst he was staying at "The Nook" in Dorking, the house where Grant Allen lived before he went to Hindhead.

Mac Donald came into the room looking the saint and poet he was, in grace abounding.

He said then that the impulse for work, the power to speak or preach, was almost withdrawn. No strong desire from within even for the weekly talks on Dante—sermons in fact, with simple texts from Dante.

On the friend and his wife leaving, he said he would walk part of the way to the station to

see them off. On the way he spoke of the brightening outlook on life, and said, "I believe more than ever I did; I expect more, I think I know more, of the New Testament. I desire my faith to be the faith of Christ; that is, the same as Christ had in God and man. That is '*the faith*,' the only faith, I wish to possess; but it is hard to be true absolutely to that faith."

With great earnestness he said, "If anything were done *for self*, or fame, or position, or praise of men, it was loss. All progress was in proportion to the decrease of self and the increase of God in us, until self became a minus-sign."

Then came the grasp of hand and the smile that kissed them in silent benediction.

At the end of August, 1898, Mac Donald was taken ill. The winter was spent in Bordighera, and although he rallied considerably, his health from this time caused anxiety to his family.

On March 30th, 1901, the festival of their golden wedding day was kept with great honour and love. The large salon was beautifully decorated with flowers sent by hosts of friends, and all round the room were festoons of orange foliage with its golden fruit. The great open fireplace was filled with yellow mimosa. Near this shrine of gold sat Mac Donald and his wife to receive the hearty and loving congratulations from the many distinguished guests and

neighbouring residents, with valued friends, who came to pay their respects to the happy pair after fifty years of unbroken and blessed union.

A white silk banner, embroidered in gold with "1851—1891," told the simple story of the eventful day.

After this golden day of beautiful memories Mac Donald's health began to fail more perceptibly. He was nursed and tended in love and devotion by those nearest and dearest, until the strain of service told on Mrs. Mac Donald, who, writing to a friend about her husband, said how beautiful it would be to see the upwaking of her dear one from this slumber of the brain. Soon after she was taken home to rest, and without weariness to watch for his sunrise. She was laid to rest in Bordighera, after a beautiful life of ideal wedded communion.

When Mac Donald returned to England it was to remain · and since the house in Bordighera has been given up, he has lived at Haslemere in great retirement. So for the last few years he has passed into a peaceful seclusion from the world that recalls his own words at the close of the *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood :*

" Perhaps this is the final trial of your faith—to trust in God to take care of your intellect for you, and to believe, in weakness, the truths He revealed to you in strength. Remember that truth depends not upon your seeing it, and believe

as you saw when your sight was at its best. For then you saw that the Truth was beyond all you could see. Thus I try to prepare for dark days that may come, but which cannot come without God in them."

In this chamber of peace he is waiting for the sunrise, and it may be to find in it, on this hither side the veil, a secret shrine of holy and mysterious communion with the Father of Light before he hears "the shortest and sweetest of songs"—

"Come
Home."

CHAPTER IV

PERSONALITY

A Gentleman—A Mystic—A Teacher—An Optimist.

AMONG the poets and artists, preachers and novelists of the nineteenth century, George Mac Donald stands out in singularly bold relief as one of the most picturesque figures, with a beautiful character and fascinating personality.

Supremely he is a poet, in the fullest and largest sense of the word, whether he writes in verse or prose ; next he is a poet-preacher, who discourses on high themes and converses on the commonest things in an uncommon way.

All he has done bears the hall-mark and sign of genius, from the smallest fragment of song to his finest story or prophetic discourse or highest aspiration of uttered prayer. And as a religious novelist he is the first of all living writers of the nineteenth century.

George Mac Donald is one of God's, and nature's, true gentlemen. He has lived the

beautiful ideal he teaches; many are the pictures and portraits he has drawn of real gentlemen.

Malcolm is a type of man with the natural instinctive mark of a gentleman, but Ian, in *What's Mine's Mine*, is a cultivated gentleman, and is perhaps the most perfect specimen of manly gentleness, with fine courage and delicate grace, that Mac Donald has portrayed. He teaches that true manners are the expression of the soul, the habit of the man.

He himself possesses the soul of chivalry and refined courtesy, and the perfect consideration for the feelings and thoughts of others.

He believes all men are brothers, and so is always at home in any class of society, natural and sincere among all sorts and conditions of life, simple, and interested with those who are *un*-intellectual and walk in the poorer ways; the humblest are most on his level.

Once when staying in a friend's house he met some Christian workers who lived in small houses, had read little, knew comparatively nothing about his own books; but their piety was real and genuine. There was no touch of condescension in his manner; he was at home with them at once, found much in common for conversation. He was deeply interested in each, and made a memorable evening for all. Afterwards he enquired personally about all of them, remembering their characters and occupations. He possesses the

happy gift of raising the tone of simple talk into lofty and beautiful realms of thought.

On one occasion, thinking he was being bored by a persistent and precocious youth in conversation, his host sought to deliver him from the oppression, but he gave his host the sweetest acknowledgment of gratitude, gently indicating he was quite capable of dismissing the young man if need be, then continued to let the youth absorb him. When he sought freedom from the monopoly, he remarked to his host: "How interesting *very* commonplace people are when you get just below the surface."

His quick understanding of people is keen and thorough, because he possesses the truest sympathy and most vivid imagination; he can always see another standpoint and put himself "in the place of other people" immediately. He never did cultivate a smile nor tried to make a compliment, but they came when anything evoked them; nothing passes his observation of men, women, and children unnoticed.

Once when the talk drifted into the incommunicableness of style—and yet how powerful was its influence—some one said that for purity of style one must go to the costermonger or a London 'bus-driver, or to a drum-major in some crack regiment. "Good! good!" exclaimed George Mac Donald. "All work must express itself in its best manner to form style."

For the poor and afflicted his heart is always open. His kindness and generosity are boundless; to the needy and distressed he has been a friend indeed. All through his life, from his earliest ministry, in poverty or prosperity, he has been ever ready to help and succour any who came across his path. His quick discernment detected at a glance the sick heart and the wearied, troubled soul in people he knew little about.

He is too much of an honest gentleman to need to use tact or diplomacy. He is at heart a true man with the spirit of chivalry, having self-control of tongue and temper. This thoughtfulness for others made him a most courteous host and most considerate guest. Once when staying with friends, after lecturing, his hostess asked him what he would like to have, and he said, "Milk, if I am not robbing the baby." When his hostess assured him there was abundance, for a cow was kept, he quaffed the flowing bowl with gratitude.

He has the elements of character that infallibly produce the highest type of manhood; love for all men, unselfishness of heart, sympathy for others, and imagination that sees clearly through the expressed into the unexpressed. He thinks considerately of others and is therefore gracious in word and deed; childlike and tender with children, manly to all women, brotherly to all men.

With this good breeding and courteous manners that make him welcome anywhere, he has also something of the Bohemian spirit—unworldly, unconventional, with a daring disregard of the tyranny of society. His well-ordered home and his high life were regulated by the perfect law of liberty. Custom and fashion were always subservient to the ways and rules of the Kingdom.

They might be needful as a harness, but there must be no bearing-rein; and snaffles are best, not curbs, for general use.

A friend once was talking to George Mac Donald about a visit he and a companion had paid, while in America, to Walt Whitman, and of the grand rugged dignity—so simple and so superior—with which he welcomed the callers, in a bare unfurnished room, that only contained three chairs, a few books, and pictures on the whitewashed walls. The friend told how the grand old man received them without ceremony, saying he would read their letters of introduction when they were gone, as he preferred to welcome them as strangers ; he talked of books and writers with glowing enthusiasm, referring to George Sand as " a woman with a touch of the divine vagabond." To this Mac Donald responded eagerly, " Isn't that beautiful ! " and spoke with great appreciation of Walt Whitman, and then of Whittier, whom he knew personally, as characteristic, simple gentlemen and poets of America, who lived the

poetry they sang. He referred, also, with admiration to Thoreau, with his love of independency and nature.

There is much in Mac Donald that is in common with wild freedom, born of the soul's aspiration and desire to escape from the trammels of things and circumstance. Nothing was more remarkable in his intercourse with the young than his power to inspire them with worthy ideals of conduct.

If forgetfulness of self, thoughtfulness for others, constitute the basis of the character of a gentleman, then he may be placed in the front rank of the high order of Christian gentlemen.

George Mac Donald is one of the true mystics of all time. He has said, " The mystical mind is one which, having perceived that the highest expression of which the truth admits lies in the symbolism of nature and human customs that result from human necessities, prosecutes thought about truth so embodied, by dealing with the symbols themselves after logical forms. This is the highest mode of conveying the deepest truth ; the Lord Himself often employed it, as for instance in the whole passage ending with the words, " If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! " (Matt. vi. 23).

The mystic is the man who sees secret things, the things hidden from the wise and prudent;

who discovers the meaning behind the material; who perceives the real truth behind the strange handwriting on the walls of time; who interprets the hieroglyphics of life; who looks through the signs and symbols of the world to read the teaching that is spiritual and permanent. The mystic, therefore, clothes his thought in the language of analogy and parable. Facts are like letters, that are signs which in combination spell words that express thought and feeling.

The mystic is the man who, walking in the sunlight and seeing leaded lights in a church, goes into the dim edifice and sees the painting in the window, and, coming out, speaks of the beauty he beheld to the passer-by, who, having only observed a window with much lead and glass, simply says, " Poor man ! he doesn't know what he's talking about when he speaks of pictures there."

The Back of the North Wind is a pretty window even from the outside, and the story has fascinating interest for children; but to perceive the loveliness of the prose poem we must come within and see the light shine through the coloured glass. This mystic element is in all Mac Donald's work, but especially in his poetry, and most conspicuously in *Within and Without.* We see the design of spiritual truth shining through the mosaic of his imagination. The natural is everywhere the revelation of the

supernatural. The romance that runs through all his writings is the romance of the soul. All the stories are the development of character, like the growth of flowers under the influence of light and shade, storm and wind, through winter and spring, to the fulness of summer and autumn.

All common events are touched with transcendent influences. The earthly life is only the outer robe of the soul, the clothing of the inner being. He is much akin to Watts in his treatment of great subjects. His characters are the personification of ideas. The ideal is always the true. His mysticism is not dimness and obscurity; it is luminous and revealing, making what is dark and opaque transparent and visible. He lives in "tune with the Infinite"; all aspects of life touch the hem of the divine garment of God. Earth, sea, sky and men are in the presence of the Eternal. The divine imminence of the Everlasting Father is the source of Mac Donald's mysticism.

His mysticism, though not obscure, makes him at times hard to be clearly understood. It is not of extravagant thought or of blurred imagination. It is always along the lines of a philosophy based on reason and common sense, but he knows and sees that there is more in life than can be accounted for in our philosophy. There are facts that not only transcend material

things, but are above and beyond human explanation. When the scientist says light and heat are modes of motion, he does not define or explain what light is. George Mac Donald, accepting the mystery of light, walks in it, sees visions in it, and finds it to be the light of God, one with truth and the Light of the World; and in the light of common day, walks by faith. He is a spiritual realist, impressionist, and pre-Raphaelite all in one.

He says, "There must be revelation before mystery. I take it that mystery is what lies behind revelation, that as yet revelation has not reached. You must see something—a part of something—before you can feel any sense of mystery about it."

The mystical element is there, behind the unveiling of the truth, but the work of Mac Donald has always been to reveal and make manifest the truth he has seen and felt, so that the mystery is for ever receding before the vision of faith and love. He discerns the hidden and occult truth in order to reveal and make it known, and to set it forth in terms of moral and spiritual beauty.

Whether he really believes in ghosts and second-sight, the reader of his books is left to judge, but there can be no doubt that he did believe in a present world pierced with the Presence of God, and so saturated with the

Divine in ordinary and extraordinary ways, that contact with the unseen realm in divers ways is only what is to be expected. With Mac Donald, as with James Hinton, there is no distinction between the natural and supernatural, no hard and fast line between the vegetable and animal kingdom; so also man and the animals are too closely allied to be totally divided, for life unifies all.

George Mac Donald is a mystic like Maeterlinck in seeing the deepest mystery in common things, that allures the mind and charms the soul; but Mac Donald is a distinctively Christian mystic and Catholic, in the best sense. He sees the mystery of life in every living thing, and in every child the image of God, the ineffable in the human, and in every babe the coming of the heavenly brother born in Bethlehem. The mystery of nature and man is the mystery of God, and if it cannot be analysed by physical science, it is capable of being interpreted into spiritual truth as man comes to love and obey and know God—the common is made *un*common and the rare and exceptional is homely and simple. Miracle is everywhere.

All the gateways of knowledge and life open into the Kingdom of Heaven; the five senses are doors into the ways of God and mystery.

George Mac Donald is no mere dreamer of dreams, any more than he is "an idle singer of

an empty day." He is a common-sense mystic, rationalistic rather than fantastic, thinking logically and philosophically in the presence of advancing science, which he honours without fear, for whatever science revealed as true must be in harmony with all truth. He is a religious mystic living in the Kingdom of Heaven, and surveying the kingdom of earth and the things of time and sense. He is a religious workman, a mystic-artist, that whether he writes poetry in prose, or puts a little prose into poetry, whether he touches on painting or music, poetry or the drama, nature or man, all seem alike the garment of the spirit or the vesture of God. He is a mystic of no school, excepting of his master Christ.

As a teacher Mac Donald had especial natural gifts for imparting knowledge and truth. He possessed the essential qualifications because he is "meek and lowly in heart," that being the primary condition of all teaching power. Many bear witness to the success of his work as a class-teacher; as a private tutor he was excellent. In many of his books he gives us glimpses of good teachers, not only revealing the importance of the vocation, but giving us ideal methods of instruction. His first hero in the *Portent* is a tutor; Mr. Graham, in *The Marquis of Lossie*, is an ideal schoolmaster. Hugh, in *David Elginbrod*, is another type of tutor.

Mac Donald conceives the mission of a dominie to be quite as sacred as that of priest or presbyter.

In all his lectures Mac Donald reveals the talent of clear interpretation. Those who came to his weekly gatherings at Bordighera testify to his gift for making obscure things plain and simple.

He was not a philosopher, although it would not be a difficult task to construct from his writings a philosophy of life. He was not, in the technical sense, a theologian, although his knowledge of theology was large. He understood well, as his books constantly show, all the great historic theological controversies, and it would be quite easy to build up from his works a system of theology and ethics that would be in harmony with his philosophy of life.

He has been pre-eminently the teacher of broader, truer, and more spiritual ideas of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man. He has uplifted the doctrine of the Incarnation and Atonement from formal and material statement into living and reasonable factors of the Christian creed. He has popularised profound aspects of truth for those who know little about dogmatic theology. He has understood the signs of the times, and translated for the unlearned the modern conceptions of religious ideas. What A. J. Scott, Mac Leod Campbell, Thomas Erskine, and F. D. Maurice taught to

the few, he has made plain and large to the many, that he who runs may read and discover for himself. He thoroughly understands Calvinism, and while exposing its errors and narrow legalism, he has done full justice to the noble type of character it could produce, in spite of its severity and exclusiveness. Like his Master, he has welcomed enquiry of the most searching kind, and to sceptics and doubters he has said "Come and see." While reverencing the creeds of the past he has taught men that second-hand beliefs have no saving virtue, that each soul must come to the knowledge of truth for itself, and that the faith that is based on eternal truth is the only belief that can mould and make character.

The keystone to all his teaching is obedience to the Father, for in doing the Will man shall ultimately know the doctrine, and be led into the truth. No man has done more for the revival of true religion, and for the making of Christianity a practical power in daily life. He has liberated the souls of thousands from bondage to worldliness and materialism; he has broken down false ideas of Providence, and delivered innumerable hearts from superstition and the fear of death.

All his sermons, spoken and unspoken, have a definite and distinct purpose for conveying truth. His stories are the exposition of religious and

ethical ideas. He never wrote a novel simply to tell a tale, or unfold a plot ; he wrote his romances because they were the best means of disseminating great themes. They are vehicles for the declaration of the message with which his heart and mind were full. The accusation that he preaches much in his books he would plead guilty to, because this was the only reason that made it worth while to write them. Both directly and indirectly the intention of all his work is to speak the living message that burnt within his soul.

Besides being a perfect Christian gentleman, a modern mystic, and an influential teacher, George Mac Donald is one of the most sincere optimists, not as a mere religious speculator or charlatan adventurer, but by reason of being a seer and prophet. George Meredith says something to this effect, that " He who thinks deeply enough thinks hopefully." So Mac Donald has thought, and his optimism, like that of Tennyson and Browning, is based on faith in Eternal and Almighty Love. He does not turn away from the problems of evil and sin, nor does he close his eyes to the pain and suffering in life. He goes down to the depths of human want and wretchedness, to the squalor and filth of the slums of our great cities. He does not ignore the cruelty in nature, nor the red tooth and claw in the animal world, nor the greed and covetousness of man,

nor the seething mass of degradation in the dregs of society, nor the anguish and agony that the innocent suffer, nor all the entailed penalties for wrong-doing and punishment on earth and in hell.

But notwithstanding, he discerns the justice of retribution and the ultimate victory of truth over all falsehood, of light over darkness, of peace over war, of holiness over sin, of right over wrong, and of love triumphant over hate and death and hell, because he believes in the literal and absolute universality of the Kingdom of Heaven, the complete redemption of man in Christ, in the assurance that " God shall be all in all."

He has the gift of teaching what he believes and of making his lessons clear and simple. He imparts the hopes that fill his soul. As he grows in maturity his outlook on life brightens. He has always kept the child heart fresh and strong, could always share in the mirth and gladness of the children.

He has lived in a world of romance with the spirit of a sanctified Bohemian, and breathing the air of perpetual juvenescence. Play and laughter are part of his religion. He was never dull ; the spirit of happy, serene joyfulness has dwelt within him and overflowed for those around him. All beautiful things have given him pleasure, and his delight has been to share with those who could see them. He knows " the best that any mortal

hath is that which every mortal shares." He has seen the best in every one, and lived in the full conviction that nothing is too good to be true, and that "the best is yet to be."

One thing George Mac Donald is not—he is never commonplace. He thinks for himself, and not in the groove made by other men. All truth must be of personal experience. He has never taught the tradition of the elders, after the manner of the scribes and rabbis. He only teaches what he has seen and known for himself. And therefore, of course, some people have thought him heterodox. He has not chosen to believe certain doctrines; his belief is the result of inevitable conviction, and his creed has made him what he is—a supreme teacher of the truth. He has learnt the doctrines he has taught through obedience to the Divine Will. His message has therefore inherent force and vitality.

Mac Donald stands out himself by himself. He is a man without a master, save the One who was "meek and lowly in heart." He is a God-made man rather than a self-made man. He has never sought to make a reputation, never pushed to "get on," never had any worldly ambitions for fame, never done anything for the sake of pay or reward. Success in life has not been the goal of his labour, nor even entered into the idlest dream of his fancy.

He is not the resultant of his time; the influ-

ences of the nineteenth century have not made him what he is. Worldly opportunity has not favoured him. All through his life he has been delicate in health, for many years unable to bear an English winter. He has been antithetic to most of the concurrent forces of the society of to-day. He has rebuked our national follies, and our sins of drunkenness and gambling, scourged our vices of pride and class distinction, thundered against our greed and covetousness, our narrow-mindedness and bigotry, denounced our pharisaism in the world and the Church, condemned alike " the worldly holy " and " the wholly worldly."

He has been a reformer above party politics, a preacher without a denomination, a teacher without a school. He is not merely the product of hereditary tendencies, plus the conjunction of circumstances and the sum of educational influences. He is a pure and natural man of genius who has never been disobedient to the heavenly vision. His heart and soul have been open to universal light ; every man could teach him—the cobbler with his awl, the shepherd on the hills, the fisherman by the sea, the child at his knee, as well as the saints and sages. He has read the open word of God in sincerity and truth, the life of man to its deeper secrets, and the book of nature to her inner heart. The most inspiring writings he has received with discrimination, and from

the less inspired of people he has caught the breath of Pentecost. Nothing to him is ever common and unclean that is purely natural and truly human. It might be said of him that he has had a share in all the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

CHAPTER V

THE POET

"Within and Without"

THE poetry of George Mac Donald is the man at his best, as far as he can be known. His poetry is singularly self-revealing, deeply spiritual and loftily religious. He sometimes touches profound abysses of the soul, and sometimes he reaches up to highest peaks of intuitional experience. He gives us visions "of the innermost." He sees nature and man to their heart, and both are illuminated with intense passion. His poetry might be called the poetry of the Spirit, or the romance of the Soul. Man and nature being alike garments of the Divine Spirit, expressions of the Divine thought, light and all creation can only be the spoken word of God in visible form. The incarnation or doctrine of the λόγος lies at the heart of all Mac Donald's teaching, both in poetry and prose. He sings only of the manifestation and mystery of the life of God in the universe around him.

Within and Without, George Mac Donald's first work, is a dramatic poem ; the soul's story of how outward forces make and educate the life within. The poem was written in December and January of 1850–51, and is dedicated to his wife, whose presence and love shared in and helped its inspiration.

The whole interest of the story centres in two characters : Julian, a man with an intensely religious nature, who is led through grief and soul-isolation into the revelation of perfect love, and step by step into the knowledge of the Father ; and Lilia, a woman who does not understand her husband, though she loves him ; for her the outward circumstances are more than her love and faith can bear. She has not enough of religion to uphold her through the strain, and so has to pass into the fires of suffering to find the reality of God ; but both alike, by trial and discipline, come into the " wonderful knowledge," and find, in another stage of existence, the fulness of complete union with each other in God.

Julian, or Count Lamballa, is a monk in a convent, who has fled from the world in the hope of finding God, but his search in the lonely cell is unavailing. His heart still cries out for the living God.

Brother Robert comes to Julian to tell him that malice has whispered that he has entered the convent because some lady refused him, and

so "turned from the lady's door he knocks at God's." Brother Robert advises freedom from this life of enforced restraint.

Julian feels the convent is really no place for him—he cannot find God in the crucifix.

When left alone he prays:

"Speak to me, my God;
And let me know the living Father cares
For me, even me; for this one of His children.—
Hast Thou no word for me? I am Thy thought.
God, let Thy mighty heart beat into mine,
And let mine answer as a pulse to Thine.
See, I am low; yea, very low; but Thou
Art high, and Thou canst lift me up to Thee.
I am a child, a fool before Thee, God;
But Thou hast made my weakness as my strength.
I am an emptiness for Thee to fill;
My soul, a cavern for Thy sea. I lie
Diffused, abandoning myself to Thee. . . .
—— I will look up, if life should fail in looking.
Ah me! A stream cut from my parent-spring!
Ah me! A life lost from its father-life!"

From this soliloquy, one feels all must come right, whatever the outward conditions of life may be, but that the man must pass through much before he finds the goal of his desire.

That night, one of the monks, in conversation with another, tells how he has visited a dying woman, who talks in her wanderings of one Julian a count, whom she has loved and lost by some cruel word of jealousy and mischief.

Other monks discuss Julian, who stands apart

from them all, one suggesting he is an unbeliever.

Julian, after much thought and prayer, resolves to leave the monastery:

> "A still small voice, I cannot but believe,
> Says 'on' within—God will reveal Himself;
> I must go from this place, I cannot rest."

With the help of his friend Robert, Julian escapes that night, saying as he proceeds:

> "So lies my journey—on into the dark;
> My God, take care of me,
> And let Thy own design in me work on,
> Unfolding the ideal man in me.
> Lead me, O Father, holding by Thy hand,
> I ask not whither, for it must be on."

The Second Act opens after Julian has been absent four years from home.

Julian has reached his own castle, where he learns from his old nurse that Lilia, his lady-love, is ill, and lodging in a poor cottage for shelter, because Count Membroni has imprisoned her father for debt, having sought the daughter's hand in vain. Julian suspects foul play, and sets himself to watch. Hence he takes up his abode at a small inn that overlooks the cottage where Lilia is staying.

While the man and woman who keep the cottage are away, Julian observes the house. A storm is gathering; it becomes so dark that he cannot

see ; he goes out to watch and listen ; he hears sounds within and enters. On reaching the landing a scream pierces the night. He opens the door to find Count Membroni, who turns to fight him, rushing at him with his drawn sword.

Julian parries the blow, and, though wounded, stabs the count dead with his dagger.

The lady faints, and Julian carries her off to his own castle, and puts her in charge of the faithful nurse. He writes to a friendly prince at Florence to set the father free, paying his debt. The Lady Lilia is taken to a secret chamber, and the nurse reports that she is delirious and in high fever. Julian says he will treat her, knowing well the art of the physician.

In the meantime, at the convent, Robert is confined in a prison-cell for aiding the escape, and the Abbot commissions Brother Stephens to find Julian.

Julian watches besides Lilia's sick bed, and in her wanderings she calls him by name. He gives her medicine and she sleeps, then trusts her to the nurse's care and goes out.

He returns to find her better. She recognises him, and says she has had a bad dream. He bids her sleep again. Julian prepares for flight to England, and bids his steward make the boat ready for immediate departure.

Julian has an interview with Lilia ; he confesses his love for her, and says, " I can refrain from

loving you no more than keep from waking when the sun shines full upon my face." Lilia returns his love in full and glad surrender. She asks about the dream, and says she thought she saw Julian fighting. He admits that he killed the Count as he would a dog that bit her:

> "He had no right to live. Be at peace, darling.
> His blood lies not on me, but on himself;
> I do not feel its stain upon my conscience."

The nurse interrupts them, telling Julian the steward waits to see him to inform him all is ready for his going. When the steward has gone Julian soliloquises, and wonders what Lilia will think when she knows that he is a monk:

> "My heart is free—
> I know that God absolves mistaken vows;
> I looked for help in the high search, from those
> Who knew the secret place of the Most High."

He returns to Lilia, and asks her to go with him to England, telling her that he has her father's consent, who is now at liberty and safe. She says she will go with him. Then he tells her he is a monk, and Lilia declares then they must part.

The steward comes to say the castle is attacked by a fierce mob, accompanied by the officers of justice, and the gate fired—therefore Julian must fly. He bids Lilia farewell, but as he goes the rush of the pursuers is heard, and she calls

"Julian! Julian!" and flies after him to the boat. They move off just as the mob bursts into the castle, seeking him. Lilia lies down in the boat; and as Julian pulls away into the darkness, he says:

"My beautiful! my bride! my spirit's wife!
God given, and God restored! My heart exults,
Hovering about thee, beautiful! My soul!
Once round the headland I will set the sail."

And when they are safely round the point he sings:

"Thou hast been blowing leaves, O wind of strife,
Wan curled, boat-like leaves, that ran and fled,
Unmated yet though folded up from life,
Sleepless though cast among the unwaking dead.
Out to the ocean fleet and float,
Blow, blow, my little leaf-like boat."

In the Third Act the scene changes to London, five years later. All Julian's estates have been confiscated because of the murder of Count Membroni.

It is night. Julian is sitting in a large, poorly-furnished room, a child is asleep in a little crib, and Julian is reading the dream story of *The Singer*.

It is the parable of one who fell asleep and dreamed that he lay at the foot of a cliff, near the top of a mountain, listening to the sweet voices of heroes who had striven and conquered.

Then appeared a youth who desired to join the Choir of the Immortals, and one said to the youth, "Come, I will lead thee to the hole in the rock: enter and sing." The youth entered and vanished into the cavern. All the throng of singers watched and waited with intense eagerness, while there came from the cave the sound of one praying and sighing, whereupon the listeners stood on their feet and sang in hope and triumph.

When they ceased, the dreamer said, "Sir, tell me what it means?" And one answered, "The youth desired to sing to the Immortals. It is a law with us that no one shall sing a song who cannot be the hero of his tale, who cannot live the song he sings. Therefore he enters the cavern, where God weaves the garments of souls, and there he lives in the form of his own tale. The sighs thou didst hear were his longings after his own ideals, and thou didst hear him praying for the truth he could not reach. We sang because in his first great battle he strove well and overcame." After a time the youth came forth, worn and pale; but his eyes were open, and tears trembled within them. Then he who led him to the cave came forth to meet him and said, "Thou hast told a noble tale; sing to us now what songs thou wilt."

Julian lays down the book and meditates. He thanks God for the way He has led him, saying:

"And though I am not yet come near to Him,
I know I am more nigh; and am content
To walk a long and weary road to find
My Father's House once more.
My God, I thank Thee, Thou dost care for me."

And then he thinks of Jesus, and says:

"One day this truth will spring to life in me,
And make me free, as God says 'I am free,'
When I am like Him; then my soul will dawn
With the full glory of the God revealed—
Full as to me, though but one beam from Him;
The light will shine and I shall comprehend it,
In His light I shall see light."

Then, turning to his little child asleep in her crib, he says:

"My darling child, God's little daughter, drest
In human clothes, that light may thus be clad,
In shining so to reach my human eyes;
Come as a little Christ from heaven to earth,
To call me *father*, that my heart may know
What *Father* means, and turn its eyes to God."

And then he sings:

"My child woke crying from her sleep
I bended o'er her bed,
And soothed her till in slumber deep
She from the darkness fled.

And as beside my child I stood,
A still voice said to me,
E'en thus thy Father, strong and good,
Is bending over thee."

Lilia is away for the evening at Lord Seaford's,

where she is the music governess to Lord Seaford's daughter. While Julian is waiting for her return, and regretting his wife's absence, the child Lily wakes up from sleep and asks her father for a story. Julian complies, and in wonderfully simple language, easy for a child to understand, tells her the story of the Prodigal Son. Just as he is finishing the parable Lilia returns. She reproves her child for being awake so late. Lily says :

> "I am afraid to go,
> Because you don't go with me into sleep ;
> And when I see things, and you are not there,
> Nor father, I am so frightened, I cry out,
> And stretch my hands, and so I come awake.
> Come with me into sleep, dear mother, come."

And Julian responds :

> "As thou art in thy dreams without thy mother,
> So are we lost in life without our God."

Lilia goes to bed alone, only to ponder over the widening stream that flows between her and her husband. She has begun to feel she is not good enough for Julian, and that he has ceased to love her, while she is needing his love more than ever. She weeps and mourns :

> "Alas ! I fear the storms, the blinding snow,
> Thy vapours which thou gatherest round thy head
> Wherewith thou shuttest up thy chamber door
> And goest from me into loneliness."

The next morning Julian is sitting alone in a

fireless room, looking out into a London winter fog. He thinks aloud :

"A numbness as of death
Enfolds me, as in sleep I walk.
Yet God is—
And I should know Him here, if Lilia loved me
As once I thought she did ! "

He wonders why her heart has been estranged :

" O my poor Lilia, thou art not to blame,
I'll love thee more than ever :
. . . . .
My soul is heavy, but I will go forth ;
My days seem perishing, but God yet lives
And loves. I cannot feel, but will believe."

Lilia comes in, saying she wishes she were in Italy. He bids her pray, kisses her, and goes out. She says, weeping :

" He tries to love me, but is weary of me."

The next scene shows us Julian in an office, preparing to go home, and saying :

" Better to have the poet's heart than brain,
Feeling than song, but better far than both
To be a song, a music of God's making.
. . . . . .
Most blest of men if I were now returning
To Lilia's heart as presence. O my God,
I can but look to Thee."

At the same time, in the house, Lilia is preparing to go out ; the contrast is most dramatic. The

child begs her to stay till father comes, because "He looks so sad when you're not here."

Lilia says :

> "He cannot look much sadder
> Than where I am. I'm sure 'tis a relief
> To find his child alone when he returns."

And so she goes, and Julian enters soon after. Lily tells her father of a dream she has had about a beautiful garden where the leaves were falling from the trees ; and one withered leaf fell and turned into a butterfly and flew away. Julian lays Lily down to go to sleep, and says :

> "What shall I do to give it life again ?
> To make it spread its wings before it fall
> And lie among the dead things of the earth ?"

Then he sings to his child a little song about a lily that drooped its head for want of moisture ; but by-and-by the rain came :

> "Little white lily
> Smells very sweet :
> On her head sunshine
> Rain at her feet.
> Thanks to the sunshine,
> Thanks to the rain,
> Little white lily
> Is happy again."

As the child sleeps, Julian says :

"Gone home unto thy Father for the night."

Julian fears he has grown commonplace to his wife, and life seems so to her :

" The commonplace is of the present mind,
The lovely is the true. The beautiful
Is what God made."

This commonplace look is " only a cloud made phantom " :

" The cloudy veil
Will melt away, destroyed of inward light.
If thy young heart yet lived, my Lilia, thou
And I might, as two children, hand in hand
Go home unto our Father. I believe
It only sleeps, and may be wakened yet."

Julian wakes alone on Christmas morning and sees the light come, like the Christ of old came to earth, lighting up all common things till it fills the world with glory. He talks with God and thinks of Christ until his heart can say :

" When I have learnt to think Thy radiant thoughts,
To love the truth beyond the power to know it,
To bear my light as Thou Thy heavy Cross,
Nor ever feel a martyr for Thy sake,
But an unprofitable servant still,—
. . . . .
When I have lost myself in other men,
And found myself in Thee—the Father then
Will come with thee, and will abide with me."

While Julian spends this desolate Christmas Day alone with his child, Lilia is at Lord Seaford's.

The Fourth Act opens with Julian at home,

reading from a book of poems a most pathetic song, *Love me, beloved*, which George Mac Donald composed for his wife before their marriage. After closing the book, Julian says :

> " I love less passionately,
> But not less truly ; I would die for her :
> A little thing, but all a man can do.
> O my beloved, where the answering love ?
> Love me, beloved. Whither art thou gone ? "

Lilia meditates alone in her own room :

> " He grows more moody still, more self-withdrawn.
> Were it not better that I went away,
> And left him with the child ? For she alone
> Can bring the sunshine on his cloudy face."

And yet, on the other hand, her better nature longs to fling itself at his feet and pray for his love, but her pride and self-love win the fatal day:

> " In love I gave myself away to him,
> And now in love I take myself again.
> He will not miss me ; I am nothing now."

Then Lilia goes to Lord Seaford, who, seeing how sad she is, talks to her and confesses love to her, till suddenly she exclaims :

> " My lord : this cannot be !
> I pray you cease, I will not listen to you ;
> Indeed it must not, cannot, must not be ! "

He asks her to forgive his rashness. Notwith-

standing what had transpired, Lilia goes again to the castle to Lady Gertrude, who is ill, and who begs her to stay and nurse her and sing to her.

Once more Lord Seaford makes love to Lilia, but she cries out :

> " Let me go !
> My husband ! Oh my white child !
> He thought I loved him—and I did—I do !
> Open the door, my lord ! "

After Lilia has gone, Lady Gertrude enters and says :

> " Dear father, you are ill ;
> Where is the Countess ? "

Lord Seaford replies :

> " She is gone,
> She had an urgent message to go home at once."

On the following day Lord Seaford and Lady Gertrude start for Italy.

Lilia leaves home, and on Hampstead Heath, in bitter agony of soul, she cries :

> " O star of love !
> Thou hast gone down in me, gone down for ever,
> And left my soul in such a starless night,
> It has not love enough to weep thy loss.
> O fool ! to know thee once, and after years
> To take a gleaming marsh light for thy lamp !
> How could I for one moment hear him speak !
> And yet, thank God, it was one moment only
> That, left in darkness and the loss of thee,

Sun of my soul, and half my senses dead
Through very weariness and lack of love,
My heart throbbed once responsive to a ray
That glimmered through its gloom from other eyes,
And seemed to promise rest and hope again.
My presence shall not grieve thee any more,
My Julian, my husband. I will find
A quiet place where I will seek thy God."

The next scene reveals Julian in his room reading a letter that has just come from Lord Seaford, telling of his love for Lilia, and that he is leaving for Italy, and bidding Julian pursue and seek revenge.

Julian is crushed with sorrow and anger. He takes his dagger and feels its point :

" Whom ? Her—what then ?—Or him—
What yet ? Would that give back the life to me ?

Then he throws the dagger on the floor, and for a time is lost in agony. At last his eyes fall on a picture of Jesus. Then his soul melts into pity, and he cries :

" How shall I win thee, save thee, make thee mine ?
. . . . .
Soul of my soul ! my oneness with myself !
Come back to me ; I will be all to thee :
Back to my heart ; and we will weep together,
And pray to God together every hour,
That He will show how strong He is to save."

Kneeling and clasping his child to his heart he says, " My little Lily, I have lost your mother."

And taking the child in his arms they go to seek Lilia.

A conversation, at a club, between friends of Lord Seaford, recounts how Julian and Lily came to Lord Seaford's house to inquire if "the Countess Lamballa was there," and how he rushed over the house, leaving this message with the porter: "The Count Lamballa waited on Lord Seaford."

Julian returns, and prays for Lilia and her return, and says:

> "I never can forgive my jealousy,
> Or that fool-visit to Lord Seaford's house."

Father and daughter again wander forth to seek Lilia, and come back. Lily asks: "Father, what is poetry?"

Julian: "A beautiful thing—one of the most beautiful that God has made."

Julian shows a book, and says: "You cannot know where it is beautiful," but some day, he tells her, she will find the beauty for herself and love it well.

And so, talking to the child, he is led to feel that he has treated Lilia inconsiderately, and has not helped her to grow to see the beauty of truth and poetry from within; that he has expected too much of her, and thus the little rift within the lute began.

Then bursting into tears he prays:

> "Father, I am Thy child,
> Forgive me this;
> Thy poetry is very hard to read."

Again he prays:

"Do Thou with me
Whate'er Thou wilt. Tell me Thy will that I
May do it as my best, my highest joy,
For Thou dost work in me, I dwell in Thee."

He has a dream in which he sees Lilia in a coffin, and hears a voice proclaim: "God is coming!" One ray of light falls on the coffin and Lilia rises and prays, and then he hears a "chant break suddenly into an anthem."

. . . . .

Lord Seaford is taken ill at Portsmouth on his way to Italy, and comes to a great repentance. He hears from a friend the report in London that he has gone away with the Countess Lamballa, and the Count is seeking his lost wife,—"clearly from his face the man is dying slowly on his feet."

. . . . .

Julian, with self-reproach, mourns his treatment of Lilia—he gave hard truth, no flowers—

"And kept her like a caged sea-mew!
God let me perish, so Thy beautiful
Be brought with gladness and with singing home.
If Thou wilt give her back to me, I vow
To be her slave, and serve her with my soul.
I, I have ruined her—O God, save Thou!"

. . . . .

Lily begins to fail, and while she sleeps Julian communes with God and has a vision of Lilia

glorified and beatified in love and beauty. He wakes to receive the last kiss of Lily :

" Oh, father, put your arms close round about me.
Kiss me. Kiss me harder, father dear!
Now! I am better now!"

Her eyes close and she sleeps the long sleep.

In another scene, we find Lilia in a cottage folding a letter :

" Now I have told him all, no word kept back.
I will go back to him
And wait on him submissive.
I go to be his servant. Every word
That comes from him softer than a command
I'll count it gain and lay it in my heart,
And serve him better for it. He will receive me."
. . . . .

Julian gives his little Lily back to God who lent her, and lays her in the country churchyard where they had talked and the child had played; sells everything and means to set out to find Lilia, but returns to his wife's empty room too spent for further travel. His mind wanders. Lord Seaford, who has recovered from his illness, in bitter repentance returns to seek for Julian and finds him lying on the floor, exhausted and dying.

Julian starts to his feet. " Seaford! What, Seaford! Where is my wife ? " He faints ; and Seaford lays him down and leaves him, going for a doctor. While Seaford is gone Julian returns to consciousness, knows he is dying, and says :

"O God, I come to Thee! Thou art my life.
O God, Thou art my home: I come to Thee!

. . . . .

My little child, I'll never leave thee more;
We are both children now in God's big house.
Come, lead me; you are older here than I
By three whole days, my darling angel-child."

Lord Seaford returns with the doctor, brings a letter, and holds it before Julian's eyes, saying, "It is a letter from your wife, I think."

"A letter from my Lilia! Bury it with me!
Lilia, my wife, I am going home to God."

And as Julian passes, Lord Seaford bends over him, saying, "Your wife is innocent."

In the fifth part the veil is uplifted. We have a vision or dream in "a world not realised." The prelude contains these words:

"And do not fear to hope . . .

. . . . .

Work on. One day beyond all thoughts of praise,
A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays,
Nor other than thy need, thy recompense."

In a cottage Lilia is seen kneeling before a crucifix, behind her a guardian angel. Julian and Lily enter. The angel tells the story to Julian of Lilia's flight as heaven understands it, then leaves her to her husband and child. Lilia prays aloud. Julian speaks, but she does not recognise him. She asks her Lord and Saviour for more than pardon, and in her prayer she cries:

"O Julian,
I am more thine than ever. Forgive me, husband.
But I shall never see thee till the earth
Lies on us both—apart—oh far apart!
How lonely shall I lie the long, long years!"

Father and child sing her beautiful verses of comfort. Julian says, as she is falling asleep:

"My maiden! for true wife is always maiden
To the true husband: thou art mine for ever."

The last scene finds Julian on a mountain peak, Lily resting on a cloud looking into the mist below. He is saying:

"And Thou wast with me all the time, my God,
Even as now I was not far from Thee.
Thy Spirit spoke in all my wants and fears,
And hopes and longings. Thou art all in all.
Was ever soul filled to such overflowing
With the pure wine of blessedness, my God!
Filled as the night with stars am I with joys:
Filled as the heaven with Thee am I with peace:
For now I wait the end of all my prayers,
Of all that have to do with old-world things,
Thou know'st I wait on Thee in perfect peace."

Then through the mists below the form of Lilia is seen approaching, and Lily cries:

"Come faster, mother dear; father is waiting."

LILIA.—"Have patience with me, darling. By-and-by I think I shall do better. O my Julian!"

JULIAN.—"I may not help her. She must climb and come."

. . . . .

Then, taking her to his arms, he says :

" O God, Thy thoughts, Thy ways are not as ours ;
They fill our longing hearts up to the brim."

The story illustrates the progress of a soul from honest doubt to perfect trust by the loss of everything but love, to the gain of God.

The preludes take the place of the chorus in the Greek drama.

The first one tells of the power of prayer and the long climb up to the Father's face and goal of bliss.

The escape from the convent symbolises the first step in the ascent, the renunciation of everything for love.

The love of Lilia that takes the monk with broken vow, the slayer of her would-be paramour, reveals the genuineness of her affection, but her progress upwards is slower.

The second prelude gives us further clue to the title *Within and Without* :

" Hark ! hark ! a voice amid the quiet intense !
It is thy Duty waiting thee without.
Rise from thy knees in hope, the half of doubt ;
A hand doth pull thee—it is Providence.
. . . . .
Of noise alone is born the inward sense
Of silence ; and from action springs alone
The inward knowledge of true love and faith."

Julian, in obedience to the impulse of the voice within, slays Count Membroni without the least sting of conscience, because he feels he is doing

a righteous act. The deed is done to rescue Lilia, and is the just penalty of crime. He can therefore claim Lilia with clean hands and a pure heart.

The second part ends with the flight of the lovers to England. Love draws them from *within*, circumstances drive them from *without* into marriage.

The *prelude of the third part* proclaims an Autumn and Winter time of desolation, but Spring is waiting behind the dark days and cold weather :

> " Secure beneath the earth the snowdrop lies,
> Waiting the spring's young resurrection-day,
> Through the kind nurture of the winter cold."

The poet Julian passes now into the cave " where God weaves the garments of the soul." Poverty and trial come ; the hardships are great ; too great for Lilia. Julian's life, absorbed in ideas, has found a path, but it leads him away from Lilia ; a little streamlet has come between them that grows into a wide river. They have missed each other ; both are to blame ; both are over-sensitive.

The man, of strong passionate nature, with active mind and earnest thoughts, has ceased to share his inward life with Lilia.

She is crushed by the weight of anxiety, gets lonely and self-contained, and goes out to teach, while Julian takes up office work. Their occupations ought not to have sundered them. The

child, too, ceases to be the bond of union she once was, for one has to care for her while the other is out ; they share nothing in common.

For five years there has been a slowly widening breach, during which the prelude or chorus says :

" Do thou thy work—be willing to be old,
Thy sorrow is the husk that doth infold
A gorgeous June for which thou need'st not strive."

The fourth part recounts the full tragedy of Lilia's temptation and flight, the search for her by Julian, the death of Lily, and then of Julian.

The prelude shows the motive of this Fourth Act :

" And should the twilight darken into night,
And sorrow grow to anguish, be thou strong ;
Thou art in God, and nothing can go wrong
Which a fresh life-pulse cannot set aright.
That thou dost know the darkness proves the light.
Weep if thou wilt, but weep not all too long,
Or weep and work, for work will lead to song.
But search thy heart, if, hid from all thy sight,
There lie no cause for beauty's slow decay ;
If for completeness and diviner youth,
And not for very love, thou seek'st the truth :
If thou hast learned to give thyself away,
For love's own self, not for thyself, I say :
Were God's love less, the world was lost, in sooth ! "

In this Act we see the full development of the little rift, also the upward growth of Julian and Lilia through sorrow and pain, till death opens the door for fuller life and perfect love.

In the last Act we have a vision in the world beyond, and the complete restoration of all in God.

The reader is left to supply much of the cause and reason for the sad tragedy; the evidence given is hardly sufficient to supply adequate grounds for the lovers to be so isolated while love exists in their hearts for one another; but doubtless the seemingly insignificant causes for separation add height to the terrible issues of the tragedy.

Both were unconscious of the influences that drifted them apart. But both were to blame in their blindness to the inward life of one another.

Julian is upheld because he is seeking God and truth; while Lilia, who has not the same hold on God, fails for a moment in her fidelity of soul, but is preserved from infidelity to her husband. Temptation reveals her real love for Julian. Both suffer, but Julian's prayers and trust have redeeming power, and both are re-united in the perfect love of God.

The penalty of Divine judgment falls heavily upon them, because they let the outward forces of the world drift them apart from the inward and spiritual union which was their rightful heritage.

All the events that should have knit them into closer union, and locked their hearts into oneness,

had, instead, the effect of sundering them, until Divine discipline made them meet for the inheritance of perfect love.

Had Lilia been seeking God as earnestly as Julian, the rift would never have occurred. The departure from within, in the secret of their hearts, split them into solitude, and only by the sacrificial fires could their lives be fused into union, never more to part.

The key to the whole problem is best seen in the *preludes* to each part.

George Mac Donald points no moral to the story; the drama is left to tell its own lessons, like many of Browning's poems, and the reader must discern the deepest meaning for himself.

CHAPTER VI

THE POET

"A Hidden Life," and other Poems

THE poem, *A Hidden Life*, is dedicated by George Mac Donald to his father with a beautiful self-revealing love that shows how much he owed to that life and influence, that—

"Revealed man's glory, God's great human heart,"

and

"I thy debtor, ever, ever more,
Shall never feel the grateful burden sore;
Yet most I thank thee, not for any deed,
But for the sense thy living self did breed
Of fatherhood still at the great world's core."

The poem tells us of a farmer's son who goes forth in the early morning to plough:

"O'er the hill the sun looked down,
Baptising him for toil."

The picture is very simple and vivid—quite Virgil-like:

"He saw his horses keep the arrow-track,
He saw the swift share cut the measured sod,

He saw the furrow folding to the right,
Ready with nimble foot to aid its need—
Turning its secrets upwards to the sun."

Returning home in the gloaming with his team he sees a lady on horseback. Suddenly her saddle slipped, and "she stood on her feet." He soon replaced it, and set the lady on her horse again. She thanked him while he waited "bewildered in her beauty," and passed to her father's house, who was the laird of the district; and he returns with his soul filled with the new vision.

The next day from the fields he—

"Returned at noon-tide, something drew his feet
Into the barn: entering, he gazed and stood,
For through the rent roof lighting, one sunbeam
Blazed on the yellow straw, one golden spot
Dulled all the amber heap, and sinking far,
Like flame inverted, through the loose-piled mound
Crossed the keen splendour with dark shadow-straws
In lines innumerable."

Until then—

"He had not known
How beautiful the sunlight was, not even
Upon the wintry fields of morning grass,
Nor on the river, nor on the ripening corn."

It was love that gave him the new vision, for love had opened his eyes to real beauty and truth.

Then when the winter comes the ploughman takes his books and learns much and studies well, and by and by goes for the winter to the Uni-

versity and wears the scarlet gown, to return in summer to the field and work. For five years he passed between—

"The garret study and the wide-floored barn,
The wintry city and the sunny fields;
In every change his mind was well content,
For in himself he was the growing same."

After he had taken his degree he returned to his father's house and farm to do the labourer's work with scholar's joy, his father having made ready a study for him in the barn.

Father and son find fellowship in work, in nature, and in thought. The young man says:

"Mine be the work that comes first to my hand,
The lever set, I grasp and heave withal.
I love where I live, and let my labour flow
Into the hollow of the neighbour-needs.
Perhaps I like it best. I would not choose
Another than the ordered circumstance.
This is God's farm."

But he always kept the memory fresh of the beautiful lady he had helped in years gone by, and blessed her "for the look that woke his heart and smiled him into life."

After three years of happy work, in harvest time on the last day of the ingathering a storm comes on, marvellously painted by George Mac Donald. That night the ploughman is taken ill, and after much care bestowed by father and

sister partially recovers, to find strength gone and consumption set in. Then he prays:

"Do with us what Thou wilt, all glorious heart!
Thou God of them that are not yet, but grow!
We trust Thee for the thing we shall be yet;
We, too, are ill content with what we are."

And so, stricken down in sickness,

"He lived by faith, which is the soul of sight."

With the coming of spring he grows weaker, and one "shining day, shining with sun and snow," he said to the old man:

"'What think you, father—is death very sad?'
'My boy,' the father answered, 'we will try
To make it easy with the present God.
But, as I judge, though more by hope than sight,
It seems much harder to the looker-on
Than to the man who dies. . . .
I think, my boy, death has two sides to it—
One sunny and one dark—as this round earth
Is every day half sunny and half dark.
We on the dark side call the mystery *death*:
They on the other, looking down in light,
Wait the glad *birth*, with other tears than ours.'
'Be near me, father, when I die,' he said.
'I will, my boy, until a better Father
Draws your hand out of mine. Be near in turn
When my time comes—you in the light beyond,
And knowing well the country—I in the dark.'"

One night, as the end drew near, he saw again in a dream or vision—

"The bright maiden high upon her horse,"

and in the morning wrote her a letter, thanking her for what she had unconsciously done, telling her how ten years had gone since first he saw her, and her beauty smote his life into love. He says:

"I have a prayer to make thee—hear the dead.
Lady, for God's sake be as beautiful
As that white form that dwelleth in my heart;
Yea, better still, as that ideal Pure
That waketh in thee, when thou prayest God.
. . . . Justify my faith
In womanhood's white-handed nobleness
And thee, its revelation unto me."

He signed the letter, and named the green churchyard where his form would lie—

"And laid the letter in his desk with seal
And superscription. When his sister came
He told her where to find it afterwards."

Then in the hush of noon he passed away.

"The father fell upon his knees and said,
'O God, I thank Thee it is over now!
Through the sore time Thy hand has led him well.
Lord, let me follow soon and be at rest.'"

The lady had married, and lived a gay society life of aimless vanity. But once there came—

"A lady veiled, alone, and very still,
Seated upon a grave. Long time she sat
And moved not, weeping sore, the watcher said—
Though how he knew she wept were hard to tell.

At length, slow-leaning on her elbow down,
She hid her face awhile in the short grass,
And pulled a something small from off the mound—
And put it in a letter. Then she rose
And glided silent forth, over the wall
Where the two steps on this side and on that
Shorten the path from westward to the church.
The clang of hoofs and sound of light, swift wheels
Arose and died upon the listener's ear."

There are some fine dramatic touches in this pathetic story. The passing look that glorified the toiler's life is tragic, in that the vision into the soul of love came only to the man, and not to the woman until after his death, when the scales fell and grief revealed the soul of love to her. As Maeterlinck would say, there is life in a look, and yet we die to live. The ploughman writes the laird's daughter whom only once he saw, and says almost with his parting breath :

"Thou knowest me not at all,
Nor dared I write, but death is crowning me
Thy equal.
I have worshipped thee—content to know the vision
Had lifted me above myself who saw."

The beauty of the idyll, *A Hidden Life*, lies in the snow-white bud of love that grew in secret, and only in death expressed itself in blossom ; but it made more lovely the life that cherished it, and it was a flower of God that really bloomed, and still blooms in Paradise.

The hidden life is first seen in the obscurity of

the man's position and character, a nameless son of simple country toil, that grew strong and beautiful like a wayside flower of the fields far from the madding crowd, developing in mind and heart to bloom for God. Then within this unworldly life there was the secret germ of love which grew up from a passing seed sown in the open air by a casual incident, that took deep root and sprang up all unseen by mortal eye—a silent devotion that flourished in God's own garden and ripened for the Eden above.

We feel the power of this hidden life in the influence that flows from it when the ploughman scholar says, as he is dying :

"I have not reaped earth's harvest, O my God ;
Have gathered but a few poor wayside flowers—
Gathered them by the way for comforting.
Have I aimed proudly, therefore aimed too low,
Striving for something visible in my thought,
And not the unseen thing hid far in Thine ?
Make me content to be a primrose flower
Among Thy nations, so the fair truth, hid
In the sweet primrose, come awake in me,
And I rejoice, an individual soul,
Reflecting Thee—as truly then divine
As if I towered the angel of the sun.
Ah, make me, Father, anything Thou wilt
So be Thou will it ! I am safe with Thee.
I laugh exulting. Make me something, God—
Clear, sunny, veritable purity
Of mere existence, in Thyself content
And seeking no compeer. Sure I *have* reaped
Earth's harvest, if I find this holy death !—
Now I am ready ; take me when Thou wilt."

It is of such quiet hidden lives that God's world is made fair, and of which Lowell sings in his song of Orpheus, who was once a shepherd :

" Yet after he was dead and gone,
And e'en his memory dim,
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,
More full of love because of him.

" And day by day more holy grew
Each spot where he had trod,
Till after-poets only knew
Their firstborn brother as a god."

The Story of the Sea-Shore is a poem dedicated to them that mourn.

In the *introduction*, the poet tells how he returns home after a long absence to find a welcome from nature as well as friends.

" And best of all, once more I paced the fields
With him whose love had made me long for God—
So good a father that, needs must, I sought
A better still, Father of him and me."

Once when out driving with his cousin Frank behind " the dear white mare," with a girl friend of childhood, they talk about an old sea-castle on the Moray coast, and the girl tells the tale connected with this old grey ruin :

A sailor from a tall brig watched the flutter of a white handkerchief wet with tears, waved by a girl from off the cliffs of the rocky coast. After many weeks the girl leaves her household

duties to watch and scan the waters far and wide for the return of the ship. "Months passed, he came not," and shadowy fear crept into her breast "Of widowhood ere ever wedding-day." The anguish grew with long delay, the sea drew her with its moan to the last point of the rocks out far into the deep, till the tide rose and drove her back. Here she came and went.

> "Betwixt the shore and sea alternating,
> Where'er she fled the sea-voice followed"

pleading and calling to her. One night she rose in answer to its cry, and stood upon the narrow beach, and as the sea crept up she turned and fled through the arch of the old tower and sank upon the sand and raved, till the sea rushed in and rose up to her waist, then ebbed and set her free as morning broke, but ever still—

> "It was the invisible, unbroken cord
> Between the twain, her and her sailor lad
> That drew her ever to the ocean marge."

The hunger of her heart grew keener; she scarcely ate or slept for longing desire to see again her sailor lover.

At last she lost her reason, and one morning she was found in a hollow below the cliffs.

> "At rest they found her, in the sleep which is,
> And is not death, she lying very still,
> Absorbed the bliss that follows after pain.

O life of love, conquered at last by fate !
O life raised from the dead by saviour death !
O love unconquered and invincible !
'Twas but one desolate cry and then her fear
Became a blessed fact, and straight she knew
What God knew all the time—that all was well."

The scenery and description of the old castle very much resemble the picture given in *Malcolm* of the ruined castle on the rocks. The incident is a sad and pathetic tragedy with a dreamy mystic undertone. The woman's passionate agony, the haunting hunger of love, is a reflex symbol of the Divine heart over the lost children of earth. And the call of the infinite ocean is a faint echo of the eternal voice that asks us—

" To render up a life thou canst not keep."

There is not much of hope or comfort in the poem except that of the sweet assurance :

" Yet all the time there lay within her soul
An inner chamber, quietest place, but she
Turned from its door, and staid out in the storm.
She entering there, had found a refuge calm
As summer evening, as a mother's arms ;
There had she found her lost love, only lost
In that he slept, and she was still awake.
Here he had found, waiting for her to come,
The love that waits and watches evermore."

The poem sheds no light on the problem of pain this side the grave ; the only solution is to

be found in the life beyond; here all that is possible is to say with Job, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." George Mac Donald bids the mourners of earth seek the quiet place where love waits the unselfish in heart, and urges the anxious to trust their loved ones to the God of the living, whether here or there.

"Turn thee, and to thy work; let God alone
And wait for Him: faint o'er the waves will come
Far-floating whispers from the other shore
To thine averted ears. Do thou thy work,
And thou shalt follow—follow, find thine own."

Alfred Vaughan, author of *Hours with the Mystics*, in an interesting review of Mac Donald's early poems, speaks of the power there is in the dreamy mystery of the poem *Love's Ordeal*, which was a recollection and attempted completion of a prose fragment read in boyhood.

The story is that of a youth who is watched one stormy night by a maiden who loves him. The wind moans and the rain falls: all nature is ominous; there is the weird sense of a coming crisis.

He tells her he has loved other maidens, but in his successive hours of trial they had failed him. He says:

"'Tis thy turn, maiden, to say no or dare.
At midnight, when the moon sets, wilt thou share
The terror with me? or must I go alone
To meet an agony that will not spare?
She answered not, but rose to take her cloak."

He stays her, for the fatal hour had not yet come; the clock ticks on. He says that when he can find a maiden that will share the doom that nightly awaits him, of growing old and passing into the icy chill of death, then will the dread terror pass.

"Then shall I rest, rest like the seven of yore;
Slumber divine will steep my outworn soul,
And every stain dissolve to the very core.
She too will slumber, having found her goal.
. . . . .
Then shall we wake together, loving still."

The clock gave warning of the hour; one long kiss and the maiden rose. Fear lay on her heart.

"She trembled as some unknown thing were near,
But smiled next moment—for they should not part!
The youth arose. With solemn-joyous cheer
He helped the maid, whose trembling hands did thwart
Her haste to wrap her in her mantle's fold;
Then out they passed into the midnight cold."

As they walk in the darkness she feels his steps tremble as if he grew old and feeble; in pain he totters on, leaning on the maiden's arm bent with age.

"His foosteps feeble, short his paces grow;
Her strength and courage mount and swell amain.
He lifted up his head: the moon lay low,
Nigh the world's edge. His lips with some keen pain
Quivered, but with a smile his eyes turned slow,
Seeking in hers the balsam for his bane
And finding it—love o'er death supreme:
Like two sad souls they walked, met in one dream.

"The moon's last gleam fell on dim glazed eyes,
A body shrunken from its garment's fold :
An aged man whose bent knees could not rise,
He tottered in the maiden's tightening hold.
She shivered, but too slight was the disguise
To hide from love what never yet was old ;
She held him fast, with open eyes did pray,
Walked through the fear, and kept the onward way."

They pass through a pine thicket, then enter a cavern like a chamber of death, and on a heap of moss and leaves that rose like a grave in the dim lamplight—

"She lay down by him, trusting and not loath."

And when he grew cold in death she took his chill face in her hands and pressed it to her bared and holy bosom. The lamp went out. "She clasped the breathless clay" in agony and fear, and shared with him in patient watch this sleep of death. At length with the first ray of dawn he moved, and then she—

"Knew that Death was dead and filled the grave.
Old age, convicted lie, had fled away !
Youth, youth eternal, in her bosom lay ! "

The story needs little explanation ; it is told with weird and vivid power. In love and trust the maiden shared the doom which no one else had dared to do. She broke the spell, having watched through the awesome darkness of the tomb. And tasting death with the man she loves she redeems him from the curse, and death is

swallowed up in the victory of love. They sleep in peace when the morning comes, and find when the sunshine awakes them that they both know the joy of immortal youth.

Some of the shorter poems are full of intense feeling and devotion :—

"Leave me not, God, until—nay, until when ?
Until I have with Thee one heart, one mind :
Not till the Life is Light in me, and then
Leaving is left behind."

Beautiful is the *Christmas Meditation* :—

"He who by a mother's love
Made this wandering world His own,
Every year comes from above,
Comes the parted to atone,
Binding earth to the Father's throne.

"Nay, Thou comest every day !
No, Thou never didst depart !
Never hour hast been away !
Always with us, Lord, Thou art,
Binding, binding heart to heart ! "

In the three hymns for *Morning*, *Noontide*, and *Evening* there is a sweet, deep, delicate tone that is almost as lovely as a Burne-Jones picture. The last one closes with this quiet twilight prayer :

"And when my thought is all astray,
Do Thou think on in me :
That with the new-born innocent day
My soul rise fresh and free.

" Nor let me wander all in vain
Through dreams that mock and flee ;
But even in visions of the brain
Go wandering towards Thee."

Lovely are the two little fragments of song entitled *The Grace of Grace*, and *Oh Thou of Little Faith.*

"THE GRACE OF GRACE"

" Had I the grace to win the grace
Of some old man in lore complete,
My soul would worship at his face
And I sit lowly at his feet.

" Had I the grace to win the grace
Of childhood, loving, shy, apart,
The child should find a nearer place
And teach me resting on my heart.

" Had I the grace to win the grace
Of maiden living all above,
My soul would trample down the base
That she might have a man to love.

" A grace I had no grace to win
Knocks now at my half-open door :
Ah, Lord of glory, come Thou in !—
Thy grace divine is all, and more."

"OH THOU OF LITTLE FAITH"

" Sad-hearted, be at peace : the snowdrop lies
Buried in sepulchre of ghastly snow ;
But spring is floating up the southern skies,
And darkling the pale snowdrop waits below.

"Let me persuade: in dull December's day
We scarce believe there is a month of June;
But up the stairs of April and of May
The hot sun climbeth to the summer's noon.

"Yet hear me: I love God, and half I rest.
O better! God loves thee, so all rest thou.
He is our summer, our dim-visioned Best;—
And in His heart thy prayer is resting now."

In much of the poetry there is a true lyric note. Take *The Autumn Song*:

"Autumn clouds are flying, flying
O'er the waste of blue;
Summer flowers are dying, dying,
Late so lovely new."

The Picture Songs are full of music.

The Songs of the Days and Nights have strains of much melody; they are wind-swept with gracious harmonies.

The poems on the sixteen selected *Women of the Gospel* have much of insight, and deal with each one in very gentle verse, but with quaint and characteristic sympathy.

The *Diary of an Old Soul* gives the finest revelation of Mac Donald's religious nature. It is a world of sacred experience in which at times one is led into the Holy of Holies. It is a rich mine of spiritual wealth. Here the soul holds intercourse with the highest. It is the religious autobiography of the author's whole nature; in it we have the deepest and highest

to which the writer attains. It is the man *ipse*, the best that work can express of the workman, but that is always short of, and less than, what the true artist really is. To quote George Mac Donald's own words : "Man must *be* better than the best he does," for our noblest sayings and doings are only signs of what we are, intimations and intentions of the soul within.

The poems for children are all delightful, charming in spontaneous flow, simple, original, and changeful. *The Girl that Lost Things* is quite fresh and perfect of its kind.

But for exquisite loveliness the now well-known *Where did you come from, Baby dear ?* which appeared first in *The Day of Rest*, 1874, will never be surpassed, and will always give Mac Donald a place among the immortals of English song. Mr. Arthur Hughes says : "He must have had exquisite joy in composing 'Baby,' for was anything rarer or more beautiful or more cheerful ever done ? "

The brevity of *The Baby Sermon* has a touch of real genius :

> "The lightning and thunder,
> They go and they come ;
> But the stars and the stillness
> Are always at home."

The quaintness and simplicity of *The Christmas Child* is finely characteristic of Mac Donald's own childlike heart :

"'Little one, who straight hast come
Down the heavenly stair,
Tell us all about your home,
And the Father there.'

"'He is such a one as I,
Like as like can be.
Do His will, and, by and by,
Home and Him you'll see.'"

The ethics of *Said and Did* form an excellent lesson for children of all ages:

"Said the boy as he read, 'I, too, will be bold,
I will fight for the truth and its glory!'
He went to the playground, and soon had told
A very cowardly story!

"Said the girl as she read, 'That was grand, I declare!
What a true, what a lovely, sweet soul!'
In half-an-hour she went up the stair,
Looking as black as a coal!

"'The mean little wretch, I wish I could fling
This book at his head!' said another;
Then he went and did the same ugly thing
To his own little trusting brother!

"Alas for him who sees a thing grand
And does not fit himself to it!
But the meanest act, on sea or on land,
Is to find a fault, and then do it!"

The Threefold Cord is a collection of poems published in 1883, and written by three friends—Greville Matheson, George Mac Donald, and his brother John Mac Donald. Greville Matheson

wrote the hymn, "O Lord, how happy is the time." This hymn is not a translation; it is of Matheson's own creation; but he received the idea from Dessler, and so conscientious was Matheson—so Mac Donald once said—that he would not take the credit of the poem, but would insist upon the heading being written thus: "From the German of Dessler." The whole hymn is beautiful in thought and feeling as a personal experimental expression of devout and pious meditation. The three last verses are as follows:

"I do not fear the wilderness
Where Thou hast been before;
Nay, rather will I daily press
After Thee, near Thee, more!
Thou art my food; on Thee I lean;
Thou makest my heart sing;
And to Thy heavenly pastures green
All Thy dear flock dost bring.

"And if the gate that opens then
Be dark to other men,
It is not dark to those who share
The heart of Jesus then;
That is not losing much of life
Which is not losing Thee;
Who art as present in the strife
As in the victory.

"Therefore how happy is the time
When in Thy love I rest!
When from my weariness I climb
Even to Thy tender breast!

The night of sorrow endeth there—
Thou art brighter than the sun!
And in Thy pardon and Thy care
The heaven of heaven is won!"

A Broken Prayer, by John Mac Donald, appeared in the first edition of *Robert Falconer*, and is certainly one of the most remarkable poems of the whole group. For depth of soul-longing and spiritual aspirations it is hardly surpassed in religious experimental poetry:

"A BROKEN PRAYER"

"O Lord, my God, how long
Shall my poor heart pant for a boundless joy?
How long, O mighty Spirit, shall I hear
The murmur of Truth's crystal waters slide
From the deep cavern of their endless being,
But my lips taste not, and the grosser air
Chokes each pure inspiration of Thy will?

. . . . .

I would be a wind
Whose smallest atom is a viewless wing;
All busy with the pulsing life that throbs
To do Thy bidding; yea, or the meanest thing
That has relation to the changeless truth,
Could I but be instinct with Thee.

. . . . .

Lord, clothe me with Thy truth as with a robe;
Purge me with sorrow. I will bend my head
And let the nations of Thy waves pass over,
Bathing me in Thy consecrated strength;
And let Thy many-voiced and silver winds
Pass through my frame with their clear influence.
O save me; I am blind." . . . .

Then he describes in strong language the desolation to which his soul can sink, and prays :

" Most Mighty One,
Confirm and multiply my thoughts of Good ;
. . . . Make me a forest
Of gladdest life wherein perpetual spring
Lifts up her leafy tresses in the wind.
. . . . .
Hear me, O Lord,
When the black night draws down upon my soul,
And voices of temptation darken down
The misty wind, slamming Thy starry doors
With bitter jests : ' Thou fool ! ' they seem to say,
' Thou hast no seed of goodness in thee.'
. . . . .
Oh, take me like a child,
If Thou hast made me for Thyself, my God ;
And lead me up Thy hills. I shall not fear,
So Thou wilt make me pure and beat back sin."

Feeling how frail the good within him is, and how crushing is the weight of woe without, he says :

" Oh, is my soul
Hung like a dewdrop in Thy grassy ways,
Drawn up again into the rack of change,
Even through the lustre which created it ?
O Mighty One, Thou wilt not smite me through
With scorching wrath, because my spirit stands
Bewildered in Thy circling mysteries ! "
. . . . .
Lord, Thy strange mysteries come thickening down
Upon my head like snowflakes, shutting out
The happy upper fields with chilly vapour,

Shall I content my soul with a weak sense
Of safety ? or feed my ravenous hunger with
Sore purged hopes, that are not hopes, but fears
Clad in white raiment ?

. . . . .

O wilt Thou hear me when I cry to Thee ?
I am a child lost in a mighty forest ;
The air is thick with voices, and strange hands
Reach through the dusk, and pluck me by the skirts.
There is a voice that sounds like words from home,
But, as I stumble on to reach it, seems
To leap from rock to rock. Oh, if it is,
Willing obliquity of sense, descend,
Heal all my wanderings, take me by the hand,
And lead me homeward through the shadows.
Let me not by my wilful acts of pride
Block up the windows of Thy truth, and grow
A wasted, withered thing, that stumbles on
Down to the grave with folded hands of sloth
And leaden confidence."

So the broken prayer is abruptly snapped off. It is mostly a soul utterance wrung from a desolate heart, and a mind full of doubt and perplexity, yet streaked with the humblest and intensest aspirations, shot with gleams of hope and trust that are bright with glory.

Many, if not most, of the forty-three sonnets are evidently by the same hand, for they are inspired with the same spirit of deep melancholy and passionate tumultuous fervour. At times one can feel the quiver of pain, and hear the throbbing heart beat, and the panting breath, and almost see the pale outstretched hand that waits the clasp of God. There is genius and

power in some lines of quite terrific force, and great beauty of tone and expression.

In the three sonnets called *My Two Geniuses* there glow some brilliant phrasing and vivid touches of colour :

"MY TWO GENIUSES"

I

"One is a slow and melancholy maid ;
I know not if she cometh from the skies,
Or from the sleepy gulfs, but she will rise
Often before me in the twilight shade,
Holding a bunch of poppies and a blade
Of springing wheat : prostrate my body lies
Before her on the turf, the while she ties
A fillet of the weed about my head ;
And in the gaps of sleep I seem to hear
A gentle rustle like the stir of corn,
And words like odours thronging to my ear :
' Lie still, beloved—still until the morn ;
Lie still with me upon this rolling sphere—
Still till the judgment : thou art faint and worn.'

II

"The other meets me in the public throng ;
Her hair streams backward from her loose attire ;
She hath a trumpet and an eye of fire,
She points me downward, steadily and long :—
' There is thy grave—arise, my son, be strong !
Hands are upon thy crown,—awake, aspire
To immortality ; heed not the lyre
Of the enchantress, nor her poppy-song,
But in the stillness of the summer calm
Tremble for what is Godlike in thy being.

Listen awhile, and thou shalt hear the psalm
Of victory sung by creatures past thy seeing ;
And from far battle-fields there comes the neighing
Of dreadful onset, though the air is balm.'

III

" Maid with poppies, must I let thee go ?
Alas, I may not ; thou art likewise dear !
I am but human, and thou hast a tear
When she hath nought but splendour, and the glow
Of a wild energy that rocks the flow
Of the poor sympathies which keep us here :
Lay past thy poppies, and come twice as near,
And I will teach thee, and thou too shalt grow,
And thou shalt walk with me in open day
Through the rough thoroughfares with quiet grace.
And the wild-visaged maid shall lead the way,
Timing her footsteps to a gentler pace
As her great orbs turn ever on thy face,
Drinking in draughts of loving help alway."

It is a relief to turn from the sombre sonnets to the less complex poetry, especially to the quaint and simple verses that are evidently by George Mac Donald, called *The Carpenter* :

" THE CARPENTER "

" O Lord, at Joseph's humble bench
Thy hands did handle saw and plane ;
Thy hammer nails did drive and clench,
Avoiding knot and humouring grain.

. . . . . .

" Lord, might I be but as a saw,
A plane, a chisel, in Thy hand !—
No, Lord ! I take it back in awe,
Such prayer for me is far too grand.

"I pray, O Master, let me lie,
As on Thy bench the favoured wood;
Thy saw, Thy plane, Thy chisel ply,
And work me into something good.

"No, no; ambition, holy-high,
Urges for more than both to pray:
Come in, O gracious Force, I cry,
O Workman, share my shed of clay.

"Then I, at bench, or desk, or oar,
With knife or needle, voice or pen,
As Thou in Nazareth of yore,
Shall do the Father's will again.

"Thus fashioning a workman rare,
O Master, this shall be Thy fee:
Home to the Father Thou shalt bear
Another child made like to Thee."

The poems of *A Threefold Cord* end with *The Shortest and Sweetest of Songs:*

"Come
Home."

CHAPTER VII

THE PREACHER

GEORGE MAC DONALD was a born preacher because he had a real living message to deliver, and the power to speak it.

Coleridge is said to have asked Charles Lamb, "Did you ever hear me preach?"

"Oh, yes," stammered Lamb. "I never heard you do anything else."

There is a sense in which Mac Donald is a preacher in all his doings and writings; indirectly preaching pervades his poetry, and more directly his stories. He is homiletical—only more didactic than Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, and Browning—discoursing, like them, to the age in which they lived on great themes.

Mac Donald has preached in his books like G. F. Watts has preached in his paintings, only Mac Donald has had a more direct message, not less spiritual but more definite, not less religious but more especially Christian.

He has not been a great preacher like Canon Liddon or C. H. Spurgeon, who have had a system

of theology to proclaim, in which their gospel was to be conveyed. George Mac Donald has returned to an earlier and more apostolic method, by simply uttering the story of the Gospel as it appealed to him, with the ideas, facts, and principles of the New Testament clothed in parable, story, or song.

When he gave up the ministry as a profession and went out into the wilderness of literature, he never *sought* an audience or a pulpit. The one came to him, and the other, in great variety, opened to him.

Also, when he resigned the parson's post, he gave up the pay, and never under any circumstances took money for doing Sunday-duty or preaching the Gospel.

Some one has said that the art of preaching is the possession of a message clearly thought out, and deeply felt, to which the whole nature of the preacher gives utterance. If that be true, then Mac Donald has the true preacher's art.

His preaching was perfectly natural, appeared effortless, without any attempt at effect; little gesture, no mannerisms, no holy tones or monotones in "G," no periods or appeals, no telling passages, no eloquent peroration, no "tit-bits" of quotations, no anecdotes, and no popular illustrations.

His sermons are messages to the heart, the mind, and the conscience of the hearer.

George Mac Donald has the natural gifts of a teacher, clear thinking, the power of adequate expression, intense conviction, with a splendid imagination and depth of feeling that flows from great tenderness of fine sympathy and strong force of burning passion for truth. Those who have heard him, will recall the absolute reverence of the whole service, the impressive reading of the Bible, the spirituality of his prayers, and the spell and power by which every word of the free extemporary utterance of the message was delivered, without the "tricks of elocution or the arts of rhetoric." Whether he preached to large or small congregations never made any difference; the force of the message came from the inward inspiration, and not from the outward accident of numbers. His preaching was the natural response to a Divine vocation.

Those who have ever been privileged to hear him conduct family prayers will never forget the devotional influence that pervaded the sacred service, when prayer was felt to be the most natural and beautiful mode of a soul's talk with the Divine Father of the family.

His spoken discourses and his volumes of *Unspoken Sermons* do not differ in quality or character. The unspoken sermons were written and published when the opportunity of utterance was denied him. For sometimes his health made speech impossible, and the message had to be

delivered in writing; but all are sermons that could be heard with even more pleasure than they can be read. Also some of his delivered sermons have been printed, and are just as well worth reading in quiet as when listened to in church midst a responsive and appreciative congregation.

Mrs. Brookfield, in an article in *The Sunday Magazine*, speaks of the Sunday evening services held in Mac Donald's house in Bordighera, which were always full to overflowing. The audience was composed not of visitors and interesting strangers only, but of the people who lived in the place. Whenever Archbishop Tait came to the Riviera he regularly attended these services. The present archbishop has also formed one of the congregation, and he narrates that once he heard the older archbishop say that Mac Donald was "the very best preacher he had ever heard." Many were the hearers who carried away with them helpful and useful memories of these pleasant and devout services of the Casa Coraggio, held for many years in the winter months.

Once when Mac Donald was preaching in the neighbourhood of Manchester, in the autumn of 1890, for the minister of a very small and poor church, the largest hall in the township was taken, which was crowded, and all the hymns sung were his, the selection being made without his permission.

After the service was over, many wanted to shake hands with him, and thank him, or have the honour of a smile or a word from him, and he remarked on reaching the minister's home: "There! what is popularity worth? I was the same man and preached the same message, but could not draw an audience; now, because of my books, what a crowd!"

His method of sermon-making shows a careful and accurate study of the original text and a complete understanding of the context. The special point of the sermon was the unfolding of the heart of an idea, the innermost meaning of the passage. There is no ingenious tapping of the text to see into what three or four apt fragments it can fall. There is not the clever and artistic construction of the discourse, such as Robertson of Brighton shows. But there is always the logical progress of thought, by which some germ of truth is developed and grows into bud, blossom, and fruit. The mechanical process of growth seldom appears; the idea is expanded rather than expatiated upon.

The sermon, in the first volume of *Unspoken Sermons*, called "The Heart with the Treasure," well illustrates MacDonald's method of preaching.

He begins by saying, "To understand the words of our Lord is the business of life. For it is the main road to the understanding of the Word

Himself. And to receive Him is to receive the Father, and so to have life in ourselves.

"What, I ask now, is here the power of His Word? *For:* '*For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.*'"

The meaning of the reason thus added is not obvious upon its surface. It has to be sought for, because of its depth and its simplicity. But it is so complete, so immediately operative on the conscience, that when once it is understood there is nothing more to be said, but everything to be done.

"Why not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth?

"Because *there* the moth and rust and the thief come.

"And so we should lose our treasure!

"Yes; by the moth and the rust and the thief.

"Does the Lord then mean that the *reason* for not laying up such treasures is their transitory and corruptible nature?

"No. He adds a *Fo*. 'For where your treasure is there will you[r] heart be also.'

"Of course the heart will be where the treasure is, but what has that to do with the argument?

"This: that what is with the treasure must fare as the treasure; that the heart which haunts the treasure-house where the moth and rust corrupt will be exposed to the same ravages as the treasure, will itself be rusted and moth-eaten.

"Many a man is going about with a rusty moth-eaten heart within a form of strength and beauty.

"The lesson applies not only to those who worship Mammon, but to those also whose pleasures are of a more evidently transitory nature do these words bear terrible warning. For the hurt lies in this, that the immortal, created in the image of the everlasting God, is housed with the fading and corrupting, till its budding wings wither and drop away, instead of haunting the open plains, spreading abroad its young pinions to the sun and air and strengthening them in further and further flight, till at last they should be strong to bear the God-born into the presence of its Father in heaven. Therein lies the hurt."

Thus we have exemplified how Mac Donald seizes the main thought—the treasure holds the heart; have the treasure in the right place, then the heart will be right, therefore the security of the treasure is the safety of the heart. It is not the value of the treasure that is of importance here, except as it anchors the heart to the *dwelling-place* of blessedness and peace. The practical point being, not the treasure, but the place where the treasure is kept, for if the treasure be above the world, the heart will be there also; but if the treasure be among the sordid things of the earth, the heart will be injured and hurt. There is no firstly, secondly, or thirdly; the scaffolding is

dropped, and all that might be said about the treasure or the heart is omitted, in order to emphasise and develop the main idea of the *safe dwelling-place*.

In the sermon on "It shall not be forgiven," there is a very careful study made of the sin against the Holy Spirit, and in this discourse Mac Donald faces the only serious argument against the doctrine and firm belief which he maintained throughout all his writings, of the final restoration of all in God.

After dealing with the meaning of forgiveness, he states that there are two sins, *not* of individual deed, but of spiritual condition, which cannot be forgiven, because they will not allow God's forgiveness to come into the soul. One of these sins is unforgivingness to our neighbour, the shutting of him out from our mercies, from our love—the murdering of our neighbour. To cherish this spirit is a sin which of itself shuts God out of our life and makes forgiveness impossible.

And the other is the resistance of God's Spirit, the persistent rejection of the love and truth; not merely doing wrong knowingly, but setting the whole nature knowingly against the light.

This is the condemnation (not the sins that men have committed, but the condition of mind in which they choose to remain,) "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."

The question with Mac Donald is this: Can the sin against the Holy Spirit be actually committed, for if so it perpetuates evil, and "leaves," as he once said in conversation on this subject, "God less than all in all."

He freely admits the possibility of this condition, for it is of the very nature of sin to cripple the power of goodness and harden the heart so that the whole nature becomes worse and worse. "But," he says, "my chief difficulty is here, can a man really fall into such a condition of spiritual depravity that forgiveness is an impossibility?" He thinks it impossible to set bounds to the consuming fire of our God and the purifying that dwells therein. But the man that speaketh against the Spirit of Truth, how shall he be forgiven? "The forgiveness would touch him no more than a wall of stone. Let him know what it is to be without the God he hath denied. Away with him to the outer darkness! Perhaps *that* will make him repent."

In the introduction which forms the greater part of this sermon, George Mac Donald deals with the nature and character of the forgiveness of sin, and considers the question of *the* unpardonable sin; then he penetrates to the root-thought of the *subject*, rather than the *text*, laying bare the difficulties which he does not shrink from facing. He realises the awfulness of

the sin, sees it to be possible, and yet dares to hope that what time and discipline cannot do for the impenitent sinner here, "inexorable love" may accomplish in eternity.

In the sermon on the text "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29), Mac Donald begins by saying, "Nothing is inexorable but love. Love is one and love is changeless. For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds."

Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more. There is nothing eternal but that which loves and can be loved, and love is ever climbing towards the consummation where such shall be the universe, imperishable, Divine.

Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, that comes between and is not of love's kind, must be destroyed.

God is a consuming fire. That only which cannot be consumed may stand forth eternally. The nature of God is so terribly pure that it destroys all that is not pure as fire. God demands like purity in our worship. It is the evil that alone is consumable. It is the law of nature—that is, the law of God—that all that is destructible shall be destroyed. The destructible must be burnt out till the fire of eternal life has possessed

a man, then the destructible is gone utterly and he is pure.

But at length: "O God, wilt thou not cast Death and Hell into the Lake of Fire—even into thine own consuming self? Then indeed wilt Thou be all in all. For then our poor brothers and sisters every one—we trust in Thee, the consuming Fire—shall have been burnt clean and brought home."

These sermons are not essays on religious subjects; they are more than meditations on great texts; they are spiritual interpretations of ideas, with didactic force, that must be preached.

The second series of *Unspoken Sermons* appeared after eighteen years. The book is dedicated to "My wife. Coraggio, Bordighera, January, 1885."

There are twelve sermons dealing with very different subjects, but all united by a little hook and eye at the close of each.

The first sermon is called "The Way," and is on the rich young ruler's question, "What good thing must I *do* that I may have eternal life." He thought to gain a thing by a doing when the very thing desired was *a being*: he would have that as a possession which must possess him. He had been endeavouring to keep the moral law, but when Christ asked obedience for the highest, the young man would not give it.

He would doubtless have gladly devoted his wealth to the service of the Master; yea, and gone with him, as a rich man, to spend it for him. But, part with it to free him for His service—that he could not—yet. The sum of the matter in regard to the youth is this: he had begun early to climb the eternal stair. He had kept the commandments, and by the very keeping had climbed. But because he was *well-to-do*—a phrase of unconscious irony—he felt *well-to-be*, quite, but for that lack of eternal life! The youth, climbing the stair of eternal life had come to a landing-place where not a step more was visible.

While he stands thus alone, and helpless, behold the form of the Son of Man!

It is God Himself, come to meet the climbing youth, to take him by the hand and lead him up His own stair—the only stair by which ascent can be made. He shows him the first step. His feet are heavy; they have golden shoes. To go up that stair he must walk bare-footed into life eternal. Rather than go, rather than stride free-limbed up the everlasting stair to the bosom of the Father, he will keep his precious shoes! It is better to drag them about on earth, than part with them for a world where they are useless.

Although never can man be saved without being free from his possessions, it is yet only

hard, not impossible, *for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

In the next sermon George Mac Donald follows up the subject and deals with " the hardness of the way," and discusses the question why it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

There is no kingdom of this world into which a rich man may not easily enter—in which, if he be but rich enough, he may not be the first ; a kingdom into which it would be easy for a rich man to enter, could be no Kingdom of Heaven. The rich man does not by any necessity of things belong to the kingdom of Satan, but, into that kingdom he is especially welcome ; whereas into the Kingdom of Heaven he will be just as welcome as any other man.

Then Mac Donald enters into a supposed conversation with a rich man on the subject, in which he shows that it is eternally impossible for the man who *trusts* in his riches to enter into the Kingdom, and for the man who has riches it is difficult. It is hard for a rich man, just because he is a rich man, to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Possessions are things, and things in general are very ready to prove inimical to the better life. We must possess them, they must not possess us. Things can never be really possessed by the man who cannot do without them, and with Him. No man who has not

the Father, so as to be eternally content in Him alone, can possess a sunset, or a field of grass, or a mine of gold, or the love of a fellow-creature according to its nature—as God would have him possess it—in the eternal way of inheriting, having, and holding. It is imperative to get rid of the tyranny of *things*. Death may give a new opportunity for deliverance from the bondage of things. But it is not the rich man only who is under the dominion of things, for they too are slaves, who having no money, are unhappy from the lack of it.

The next sermon is a sequel to the first two. Mac Donald calls this third discourse "The cause of spiritual stupidity"—from the text Mark viii. 21: "How is it that ye do not understand?" In the former case it was the possession of wealth; in the latter, the not having more than a loaf, that rendered the men incapable of receiving the Word of the Lord. With the love of money or the hate of poverty, the evil principle is precisely he same.

Here the *want* of things filled the heart. The care for *things* must be cast out to make room for the Eternal God to enter in and dwell.

Then follow two important sermons on Prayer. After facing some of the difficulties about prayer, Mac Donald recognises that need is the first condition of prayer; we must ask that we may receive, for God withholds that man may ask, in order to bring His child to His knee. The

ripeness for receiving is the asking. The blossom-cup of the soul, to be filled with the heavenly dews, is its prayer.

When the soul is hungry for the light, for the truth—when its hunger has waked its higher energies, thoroughly roused the will, and brought the soul into its highest condition, that of action, its only fitness for receiving the things of God, that action is prayer. Then God can give. For the real good of every gift it is essential, first, that the giver be in the gift—as God always is, for He is love—and next that the receiver know and receive the giver in the gift.

In the sermon on the text, ". . . the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15), Mac Donald says by the word translated *adoption*, Paul means the raising of a father's own child from the condition of tutelage and subjection to others—a state which he says is no better than that of a slave—to the position and rights of a son. None but a child of the Father could become a son. The idea is a spiritual coming of age; only when the child is a man is he really and fully a son. This thought is worked out by careful exegesis wherever the word *adoption* is used. God does not *make* His children to become sons, but "He gives them power to become the sons of God." In choosing and obeying the truth, men become the true sons of the Father of Lights.

The world exists for our education; it is the nursery of God's children, troubled because the children are slave-children, not good children. The whole creation works for the development of the children of God into the sons of God. When at last the children have arisen and gone to the Father, they have entered their predestined sonship and can say "Abba, Father."

The sermon on "The Voice of Job" is a fine study of the book Mac Donald calls "the book of faith," as well as a clear and sympathetic delineation of the character of the heroic soul therein portrayed.

All these sermons are winged messages of love and truth; they are visions of a seer, who must proclaim the burden the Lord has laid upon his servant; they are the vocal soul of the preacher's best thought on high themes; they are not the words of a dying man to dying men, but of a living and quickening spirit to immortal brothers, children of the Eternal Father.

In the third volume of *Unspoken Sermons*, published from Bordighera, May 3rd, 1889, and dedicated to "My Wife" with these lines:

> "Sun and wind and rain, the Lord
> Is to seed his Father buried;
> For he is the living Word,
> And the quickening Spirit,"

Mac Donald gives his matured convictions on great Christian truths. About opinions of men,

conventional ideas, and traditional orthodox views, he does not care, nor is he anxious that any should adopt his beliefs except as they harmonise with the living and abiding truth. For he says, only those can see the truth who are willing to do it and follow it, and only those can know the doctrine who do the will of God. To the obedient heart and life the truth will be made manifest.

In a long discourse on "Justice," from the text "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work," Mac Donald gives a confession of his belief.

It is a sermon in which the preacher, in profound thought and earnest conviction, deals with the question of forgiveness and the doctrine of the atonement. He boldly attacks the old Calvinistic idea of a material and legal theory; but the discourse is not destructive; it is rather constructive, and offers a real contribution to modern theology, based on a long and careful consideration of the whole subject. He recognises that the crux of the whole difficulty is one of morality.

He states plainly and simply that the justice of God must be absolutely fair, that justice which is merciless is vitiated, and mercy without justice is impossible with God. That punishment, however necessary, is no "offset to sin," and therefore does not atone for sin. Justice requires that sin should be put an end to, and not only that, but that it should be atoned for; therefore Christ

died to save His people, not from punishment, but from their sins. He did not seek to offer God a satisfaction for sin except by an obedient return to the Father. Mac Donald refuses to build up a theory that shall banish all difficulties, but he courageously states his beliefs and says, "I believe in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, my Elder Brother, my Lord and Master, that He has a right to my absolute obedience. I believe that He died that I might die like Him—die to any ruling power in me but the will of God—that He is my Saviour from myself and all that is not worth having, that he died that the justice and mercy of God might have its way with me. I pray that He will give me what punishment I need to set me right or keep me from going wrong. He died to deliver me from all sin. I believe that there is nothing good for me but God, and more and more of God, and that alone through knowing Christ can we come nigh to Him. I believe that no man is ever condemned for any sin except one—that he will not leave his sins and come out of them, and be the child of the Father. I believe that no hell will be lacking which would help the just mercy of God to redeem His children. I believe that to him who obeys and opens the doors of his heart to receive the eternal gift, God gives His Spirit, which will lead him into all truth.

"But nowhere am I required to believe in anything, or in any statement, but everywhere to

believe in God and in Jesus Christ. I believe in the atonement—call it the *a-tone-ment* or the *at-one-ment*, as you please—that Jesus Christ *is* our atonement, that through Him we are reconciled to and made one with God. I am not writing a treatise on the atonement, my business being to persuade men to be atoned to God, yet I believe in the atonement being a making-up for the evil done by men towards God. Did not the Lord cast Himself into the eternal gulf of evil, yawning between the children and the Father? Did He not lay down His life persuading us to lay down our lives at the feet of the Father? Has not His very life, by which He died, passed into those who received Him and re-created theirs, so that now they live with the life which alone is life? Verily Christ made atonement. It is God who has sacrificed His own Son to us; there was no way else of getting the gift of Himself into our breasts. Jesus sacrificed himself to his Father and the children to bring them together—all the love on the side of the Father and the Son, all the selfishness on the side of the children. If the joy that alone makes life worth living—the joy that God is such as Christ—be a true thing in my heart, how can I but believe in the atonement of Jesus Christ? I believe it heartily, as God means it.

"As the power that brings about a making-up for any wrong done by man to man, I believe in

the atonement. Who that believes in Jesus does not long to atone to his brother for the injury he has done him ? Who is the mover, the creator of the repentance that restores fourfold ? Jesus our propitiation, our atonement, He makes us make atonement."

But Mac Donald does not believe that the sufferings of Christ, as sufferings, justified the Supreme Ruler in doing anything which He would not have been at liberty to do but for these sufferings.

This sermon on " Justice " gives us the fullest epitome of Mac Donald's belief, and is perfectly in accord with all he has written.

The old commercial view of sacrificial payment for the debt of sin in order that God may forgive, he totally condemns as a travesty on the justice and mercy of God ; but the necessary work of the Divine mediator to re-unite the sinful children to the holy and righteous Father, he joyfully believes.

In the beautiful sermon on " The Inheritance of Light," from the text in Col. i. 12, Mac Donald says : " To have a share in any earthly inheritance is to diminish the share of the other inheritors. In the inheritance of the saints, that which each has goes to increase the possession of the rest. In this inheritance, then, a man may desire and endeavour to obtain his share without selfish prejudice to others ; nay, to fail of our share in

it would be to deprive others of a portion of theirs. The inheritance is simply the light, God Himself, the light. The inheritance of the saints is the share each has in the light. The true share is not what you have to keep, but what you have to give away. The thing that is mine is the thing I have, with the power to give it. The thing I have *no* power to give a share in, is nowise mine ; the thing I cannot share with every one cannot be essentially mine own." The cry of the thousand splendours which Dante tells us he saw gliding towards them in the planet Mercury, was :

"Lo, here comes one who will increase our loves."

He goes on to show how every man is a member of God, and each gives to others what others have not.

Light is my inheritance through Him whose life is the light of men to wake in them the life of their Father in heaven. "Loved be the Lord who in Himself generated that life which is the light of men."

In all the *Unspoken Sermons*, each one is linked to the preceding with fine and lovely bonds of thought ; though varied and distinct in character, the threads that bind them into unity have a singular charm.

The Hope of the Gospel, published in 1892, is a volume of *spoken* sermons. In speaking to a friend about the one entitled "The Yoke of

Jesus," Mac Donald mentioned, with great gladness, the new thought some one had suggested to him, that when Jesus said "Take My yoke," He did not mean a *new* yoke, but it was an invitation to have the privilege of going into harness with the Master, and sharing, like oxen ploughing a field, the yoke Christ Himself wears. "Come with Me," Jesus says; "leave all else except the place beside Me; put your shoulder into My yoke of doing the Father's will, and we will both pull together." Just think what a call of honour and love that is for us!

Nothing was more delightful in conversation than to hear him talk about the sermons that were growing up in his mind.

In this sermon, "The Yoke of Jesus," he draws attention to the context of the passage, and shows how the "things revealed unto babes" and Christ's prayer of thankfulness stand related to the invitation to take the Saviour's yoke. It is because "the Great Brother" has come from the deeps of love to call the children home out of the shadows of a self-haunted universe. The babes are those who have not yet wandered. The child who has not yet walked above a mile or two from his first love, is not out of touch with the mind of the Father. Quickly will he seal the old bond, when the Son Himself, the first of the babes, the one perfect babe of God, comes to lead the children out of the lonely "shadows of eternity" into the

land of the "white celestial thought." As God is the only real father, so it is only to God that any one can be a perfect child. In His garden only can childhood blossom. Having spoken to the Father and then to the disciples, Jesus then speaks to the world, and says, with overflowing heart, "Come unto Me; I will give you rest. Take *My* yoke upon you."

The volume that is entitled *The Miracles of our Lord*, dedicated "to F. D. Maurice, honoured of God, I humbly offer this book," must be included among his discourses. In the introduction Mac Donald gives his idea of miracles. He sees them to be the revelation of God's work in miniature. "This, I think, is the true nature of the miracles, an epitome of God's processes in nature beheld in immediate connection with their source—a source as yet lost to the eyes and too often to the hearts of men in the far-reaching gradations of continuous law. That men might see the will of God at work, Jesus did the works of His Father thus."

"Christ's miracles in bread and wine were far less grand and less beautiful than the works of the Father they represented, in making the corn to grow in the valleys, and the grapes to drink the sunlight on the hillsides of the world, with all their infinitudes of tender gradation and delicate mystery of birth. But the Son of the Father be praised, who, as it were, condensed

these mysteries before us, and let us see the precious gift coming at once from gracious hands—hands that love could kiss and nails could wound."

The first miracle is one of creation, at least to our eyes more like creation than almost any other. "That the wine should be the first miracle, and that the feeding of the multitudes should be the only other creative miracle, will also suggest many thoughts in connection with the symbol Christ has left us of His relation to His brethren. In the wine and the bread of the Eucharist, He reminds us how utterly He has given, is giving, Himself for the gladness and the strength of the Father's children. Yea, more; for in that he is the radiation of the Father's *glory*, this bread and wine is the symbol of how utterly the Father gave Himself to His children, how earnestly He would have them partakers of His own being.

"It was not the power, however, but the *glory* that Jesus showed forth in the miracle."

The wedding-guests could have done without more wine, and better wine. But the Father is ever working to render life more rich and plentiful. His gifts are to the overflowing of the cup; but where the cup would overflow, he deepens its hollow and widens its brim.

"Our Lord is profuse; like His Father He will be lavish to His brethren. He will give them

wine indeed. But even they who know whence the good wine comes, and joyously thank the Giver, shall one day cry out, like the praiseful ruler of the feast, to him who gave it not, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until *now*.'"

The treatment of the miracles of healing is very fresh and striking. After considering the cure of Simon's wife's mother, as a type of all such miracles viewed from the consciousness of the person healed, Mac Donald then considers the miracles of healing, unsolicited by the sufferers. The Master awakened a dormant faith that became active at his word. "The woman with the spirit of infirmity," Luke xiii. 11–17, had her share in the cure, for with the given word and power of Christ *she* had to *lift herself up*. "The man with the withered hand" made no request for healing, but in the act of obedience the active will and the uprising trust enabled him to co-operate with Christ and "stretch forth his hand." *In* the act came the cure. "The man paralysed for thirty-eight years" sought no cure from Jesus, but at the spoken word took up his bed and walked. So "God's gifts glide into man's choice." To refuse obedience is to destroy the gift.

The man born blind was anointed with wet clay, made blind a second time by Christ, and sent to the pool to wash it away; clay and blindness depart together by the act of the man's faith,

and the man "came seeing." The life would henceforth witness to the truth.

In the two remaining miracles in which the cure was unsolicited, the "healing of the man with the dropsy" and the "restoration of the High Priest's servant's ear," there is no record of share or response on the part of the sufferers.

The miracles of healing solicited by the sufferers are four :

"The woman with the issue of blood, who touched the hem of Christ's garment."

The leper who said, "If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

The ten lepers who said, "Jesus Master have mercy on us."

And the blind who cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us."

These all illustrate our Lord's response, not merely to the need of the sufferer, but to the more or less perfect or imperfect faith. The Master does not ask of them any act of co-operation, because faith was already active.

The miracles granted to the prayer of friends were six :

"The cure of the nobleman's son."

"The daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman."

"The centurion's servant."

"The palsied man borne by four."

"The man deaf and dumb."

" The blind man of Bethsaida."

Each case is treated with great discrimination, and alike reveals the power of faith and the privilege of prayer. Every instance of healing is full of symbolism and analogy.

The remaining miracles are classified under the following heads :

" The casting out of devils."

" The government of nature."

" The miracles of destruction."

" The Resurrection."

" The Transfiguration."

Concerning " the withering of the fig-tree," Mac Donald says : " Our Lord condemned the tree to become in appearance what it was in fact— a useless thing. It was dried up from its roots. Christ did not urge in words the lesson of the miracle-parable : He left that to work when the fate of fruitless Jerusalem should also become a fact."

About the Transfiguration he tells us that " it was but the visible outbreak of light and life, so strong as to be life-giving and life-restoring. The flesh it could melt away and evermore renew. Such a body might well walk the stormiest waters. A body thus responsive to and interpenetrative of light, which is visible life, could have no sentence of death in it. It would never have died.

So He vanished at last from the eyes of His

friends, only to draw nearer—with a more intense and healing presence—to their hearts and minds.

Thus, evidently, George Macdonald suggests that the Transfiguration is a key to the vanishing and appearing of our Lord after the Resurrection, and also to the condition of the Ascension.

All the sermons are characteristic of the man. They are the expositions of a seer. Spiritual insight marks them. There is no effort to be original, but they are so simply because the truth is seen by himself and expressed as he has felt the power of it; they are never commonplace; they are illuminated with touches of good thinking and fine imagination, so that they are never dry. His exegesis is sound and incisive, and is as fresh as it is beautiful. He worms his way into the heart of his subject like the action of a gimlet or a corkscrew. And often, as some one said of his preaching, the deeper he goes the clearer his interpretations get, until he seems to let the daylight into the darkest recesses of some obscure passage, or else he lights the lamp of truth from within, and the dark passages become bright from end to end. He explains the dim and mysterious things with common sense and reason, and he transforms the commonplace and familiar things with the magic of his mystical imagination, and they become new and *un*common.

Although the main elements of his teaching

recur again and again, recurring like silver threads through story and song, parable and sermon, he never repeats himself. Fresh aspects of old themes appear in endless variety. All his teaching radiates from the one centre of the true Fatherhood of God; that life here is the nursery and infant school for all the children to be trained by sorrow and suffering, need and want, to come to seek and find the Father. Also, that we learn the doctrine, as we *do* the Father's will; we only come to know the truth as we are obedient to its voice. Life continues hereafter, character goes on developing. Hell is only the hospital for sin-sick souls, a state where the severest treatment is applied in order to awaken the soul to repentance. All punishment is remedial and is of Divine love; that heaven here or beyond is only dwelling in the eternal light and love of the Father. That whenever, and wherever, men turn to the Father, it is through the work of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

There is a practical aspect to all his discourses. He does not preach to enforce a creed, but to inspire a life. His sermons are to help men to form their own religious convictions. He does not expect any two souls to see the same truth in the same way. He is content that every man should form his own opinions according to the light God gives. But each man must live the truth he knows, and practise the faith he believes. No

sermon would be worth George Mac Donald's preaching that could not be translated into action and conduct, and no creed would be worth teaching that did not help to the bettering and perfecting of character.

He is never weary of declaring the Gospel to the lost, because they are only "those not yet found." He proclaims a final "day of the Lord," when all shall be brought home to the Father's heart and home, when—

> "Time shall die, and love shall be,
> Lord, as time was over death."—*Swinburne.*

And "time and death having travelled together through the ages, are in the end overthrown; love alone arises on immortal wings," as Watts says, and as he depicts in "Love Triumphant."

CHAPTER VIII

LECTURER

George Mac Donald's lectures form an important part of his life's work. Having been a teacher and lecturer from quite early days, he obtained great proficiency and much popularity in this sphere of labour. He made his lectures instructive, interesting, and at the same time they afforded the opportunity of doing a good deal of preaching. They became the vehicle for much teaching in the moral and spiritual sphere; his "asides" were often as important as the main theme of his discourse. In these lectures he rebuked our follies, our greed and coveteousness, our bigotry and narrow-mindedness, denounced our Pharisaism in the world and church, condemned alike "the worldly holy" and "the wholly worldly."

He talked on subjects he loved and with which he was entirely familiar. His lectures were the cream of his thinking on the plays or poems or men he spoke about. They were generally de-

livered, like his sermons, without notes or MS. His criticism was fair and just, because his judgment was sound and his insight clear, and his appreciation of good work was always enthusiastic. The greatest charm was the personal influence and character of the man that shone through the lectures. They were never dry or monotonous; one could hear the same lecture again with quite fresh interest; he made new light to shine forth from old themes.

The lectures that George Mac Donald delivered at Mrs. Ellis's School for Young Ladies in Hoddesdon, and at Miss Taylor's school at Finchley, made a lasting impression on many of the girls. Some of them still talk of the interest he awakened in them for poetry and literature by his teaching, although some thirty years ago. He managed to inspire in the minds of his hearers something of the love and admiration he felt for the subjects he talked about. He had the happiest knack of adapting himself to the kind of audience he had to address; especially with the young, the poor, or the less well-informed. He often seemed impatient of applause, but was greatly encouraged by the arrested and sustained silence of close attention.

The lectures on Shakespeare's plays were excellent in their grasp and interpretation. He said the way to read the plays of the great Master "was to treat them as a dog does a bone, that

is, to get every scrap of meat off, and then to crunch it and get all the marrow out, and leave nothing behind untasted."

The following account of the lectures has been taken from notes made at the time they were delivered, which may suggest the treatment of the subject, but cannot reproduce their character and power, which were unique.

His treatment of *Hamlet* is based on a close and long study of the play. In 1885 he published an edition of *Hamlet*—"A study of the text of the folio of 1623," with which are printed some valuable notes on the page, opposite to the text. This book is the only one of George Mac Donald's published on a "royalty," and the only one that yielded no financial profit.

After close investigation of the play, Mac Donald comes to the conclusion that Hamlet is a man of prompt action and quick decision, therefore blamed himself in his first soliloquy—"a soliloquy being a vocal mind," or a section of the inner thought exposed to view—for having delayed vengeance on his uncle. But while his heart was convinced of his uncle's guilt, his mind and judgment were not sure. He must find proof of the murder, such proof as would satisfy others as well as himself; his first duty was to seek evidence. The delay is one of the strongest indications of his sanity. He must have evidence to prove the case before a court of law. The mere

word of a ghost, which no one heard but himself, was not sufficient to justify him in slaying his uncle. Unless he were sure beyond a doubt it would be another murder, and not righteous retribution.

The character of Hamlet, according to Mac Donald, is that of a truly noble man of swift decision and earnest, prompt action.

He was the best fencer in Denmark—a clear proof of his ready mind, firm will, and skilful hand; no man of indecision could be a good fencer. He possessed splendid courage that defied augury and dared only to do right. He was a religious man who believed in Providence and in immortality. In the time of his great trouble, when for a moment there came the temptation of suicide, in order to escape the awful burden set upon him, he conquered it at once and for ever:

> "O that this too, too solid flesh should melt,
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter."

To kill himself was against God's law, he knew, so he triumphed over the passing temptation because he was a religious man; for true religion must always be obedient to God's will. The question was settled, and the temptation never returned.

Of course Hamlet was never mad, only he acted the part so well that people believed he was. He only pretended to be mad in order to find out what his duty was and how to do it. The promptness of decision and action was made evident when he slew the spy behind the tapestry; doubtless he thought it was his uncle.

Another instance of his readiness was when carried off to England and attacked by pirates; he was the only man to board the enemy sword in hand.

His friendship with Horatio and his love for his mother are beautiful revelations of a fine spirit and noble nature.

Hamlet, to Mac Donald's mind, is a truly great character, not a man of weak purpose and vacillating will, afraid to carry out the awful task laid upon him. He acted all through as a wise, prudent, conscientious man, perfectly capable of action, only he must first be quite sure of the rightness of his position in being judge, jury, and executioner of his uncle for the crime he had committed.

Had he acted precipitately and killed the King, the people would have asked why, and in reply all he could have said would have been, "Because my father's ghost told me he was murdered by his brother."

Hamlet said to himself that the ghost might be a deception of the devil, and he sought for

confirmation of his uncle's guilt; and when that came from Claudius's own lips which Hamlet overheard, his resolution was formed. He would have stabbed the King on the spot, but forbore killing him in the odour of sanctity. For, according to the notions of the time, to kill a murderer while at prayer before the altar would only be to send him to heaven.

Would that be justice—the murdered man in hell and the murderer in heaven? It was not fair, either, to slay the man on his knees, and that from behind. And though now he had become sure of the King's guilt, Hamlet had no positive and presentable proof to justify the act of vengeance.

"At length, after a righteous delay, partly willed, partly inevitable, he holds documents in the King's handwriting as proofs of his treachery —proofs which can be shown—giving him both right and power over the life of the traitor. Then, and only then, is he in cool blood, absolutely satisfied as to his duty—which conviction, working with opportunity, and that opportunity plainly the last, brings the end; the righteous deed is done, and done righteously, the doer blameless in the doing of it. The poet is not careful of what is called poetic justice in his play, though therein is no failure; what he is careful of is personal rightness in the hero of it."

"The hesitation of Hamlet is," George Mac Donald says, "the hesitation of a noble mind."

Hamlet's journey to England and the discovery, in the papers, of the King's treachery, and his escape back to Denmark, were the signs of the Divinity that shapes the ends of life. He felt his existence and all the circumstances that surrounded him were under the control of Providence, and the burden of his awful responsibility grew henceforth light. To Horatio, Hamlet said, with the courage born of faith : " We defy augury ; " " there's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow." He was ready for life or death ; willing for any fate.

In the final scene the whole villainy of the King is exposed. The true moment had come. Hamlet, with a clear conscience, slew his uncle, and was permitted to go, having performed his work in righteousness. So ends the " Tragedie of Hamlet," *the Drama of Moral Perplexity*.

" It seems to me," says George Mac Donald, " most admirable that Hamlet, being so great, is yet outwardly like other people ; the poet never obtrudes his greatness. To my mind he is the grandest hero in fiction—absolutely human —so troubled and yet so true."

George Mac Donald's treatment of *Macbeth* is deep and searching. He calls it " The Play of Ambition," or " The story of a woman who would have her own way." In this great tragedy Mac Donald reveals how Shakespeare gives the

history of a man and woman who were very anxious to rise in the social scale, and who, in seeking to do so, sank to the utmost depth in the moral scale. Macbeth is a brave man, a good fighter, and he had just enough conscience to make him miserable when he did wrong. He had the habit of thinking aloud, and he heard voices no one else heard. He was an imaginative and superstitious man, without true religion; self-interest was the whole purpose of his life. Lady Macbeth was not troubled with the imagination of her husband. She saw no ghosts, but conscience worked in her. She slept to see the guilt of her crime. She was a lower type of character than her husband; to her the essence of well-being was to have what she wanted, and do what she desired. They were not uncommon characters, only they were written large, for all to see, the result of a life of ambition, and the love of one's own way. They both gained their end, and Shakespeare is realistic, and reveals the worthlessness of their triumph.

Macbeth says:

"I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, wealth,
Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not."

. . . . . .

"How does your patient, doctor?"
DOCTOR. "Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,
That keep her from her rest."

Lady Macbeth dies by her own hand. The news of her death is brought to Macbeth, who says:

"Out, out brief candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

George Mac Donald demonstrates that the tragedy of the play does not lie in the fact that a violent death ends the career of Macbeth and his wife, but that the harvest of ambition and self-will was miserable and devoid of all glory, and that the pursuit of ambition and the endeavour to attain selfish desires renders life wholly worthless, and leaves *nothing* but regret and despair. The moral teaching of the play was brought out in the lecture with tremendous force, and driven home to the hearer with a solemnity that was thrilling. The readings were rendered with great feeling and judgment, and for nearly two hours the lecturer would hold a large audience spellbound with interest.

The lecture on *King Lear* is remarkable from the way in which George Mac Donald gathers

all the accessories and internal evidence of the play to show how this foolish old man, bad-tempered, and crazed by uncontrolled passion, is really worth saving. It is as if the Lord turned all His artillery of heaven upon him, and sent all the sheepdogs of the fold of God to rescue this forlorn and shattered life, so that he might become a true child at last, and therefore a real man and son of the Father, helped by the ministry of the fool, the fidelity of Kent, and the affection of Cordelia.

The storm works out a Divine purpose, and we can follow the character of the wayward, self-loving old man through self-pity and self-justification to self-forgetfulness, till he knows he has sinned against heaven, and, crying for patience, at last becomes a "little child" and passes homeward.

The story is the parable of the storm and what it can work out for man, "but it is real history; so when God sends you trouble, take it with both hands."

On Cordelia, the girl with a heart, Shakespeare spent his best.

Once when lecturing in Derby on "Wordsworth," George Mac Donald borrowed a copy of Wordsworth's poems for the purpose of reading a portion for the lecture. He returned the copy to the friend, who had greatly enjoyed the lecture, with this verse written in :

"Who *knows*, doth gather shining things
With which the world is strowed:
Who *loves*, outspreads two mighty wings
And bears to heaven the load."

During Macdonald's more than twenty years of winter residence at Bordighera, he used to give readings in the large room at Casa Coraggio on Wednesday evenings to any who cared to come. All were welcome, and many were the travellers who availed themselves of the privilege.

One poet was generally selected for the evening. Without any elocution except that which nature inspired, he read with clear voice and impressive tones the meaning into and out of the poems. Sometimes the readings were interspersed with lucid and illuminating observations. At one time he took up the close study of Dante, with which he was already most familiar. The result was one or two lectures on the great master and his work for larger audiences in England.

Sometimes tableaux were given by the family, for all were gifted with the histrionic art. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was played in dramatic form, and all this was done entirely under Mrs. Mac Donald's management. The tableaux were generally Scripture subjects, and usually represented copies of the pictures of the famous Italian artists. Among the subjects were "The Nativity," "The Adoration of the Magi," and "The Finding in the Temple," and sometimes

they were accompanied by music and singing. The religious tableaux were greatly appreciated by the resident Italians.

The family gave a performance of *Macbeth* that was carefully and cleverly rendered.

The greatest success of these entertainments was undoubtedly the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which George Mac Donald took the part of Greatheart, and Mrs. Mac Donald was Christiana. Sometimes he played the part of Evangelist. This representation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was given in England. The Steinway Hall was taken in London, and the sacred play was simply but beautifully enacted. Large audiences were drawn, and though at first many friends were a little dismayed at this public acting of so hallowed a work, yet all who came and saw and heard the rendering of the old story, with the simple Puritan costumes and plain stage accessories, went away feeling that no performance could be more unpretentious and reverential. Everything was subordinate to the real meaning of Bunyan's dream.

There was a quiet, unworldly pathos about the rendering that was hardly disturbed even by the crying, on one occasion, of one of the children, who refused to be comforted by any of the Pilgrims; so the bell was rung, and the nurse appeared and removed the weeping infant pilgrim.

These performances were sometimes given in

large drawing-rooms, also in halls in some of the provincial towns. They were well received wherever they went. The criticism was varied—" The religious people thought the performance was too theatrical, and the theatre-going people said it was too religious." Everybody recognised a peculiar charm about the whole caste, and all agreed that Mac Donald was to the manner born in the character of " the Interpreter " ; he did not act ; he *was* the Interpreter ; he simply played his own vocation in life.

Some of his friends remember with pleasure the earlier theatrical efforts at " The Hermitage," Hammersmith. Mr. Arthur Hughes says : " I remember most delightful little plays given by the several small children under the direction of their parents—Mrs. Mac Donald having very special genius in that direction. An exquisite refinement pervaded all, without setting limit to the fun thereof. The most beautiful and touching stories from Grimm were given with perfect stage management and cleverness in adapting ordinary surroundings, and with charming accompaniment of music and song—exquisite in feeling, and I should think with the most happily educating results to the child-players."

Mr. Hughes speaks of visits made a little later, " when the amusement blended, and almost imperceptibly grew, into reverential service. For the fulness of the master knew no limit and more

and more lived in the highest—'the vision and the faculty Divine.'"

All the entertainments, given in public or in private, were alike touched with the spirit of consecrated service, because with George Mac Donald all art of drama, music, painting or poetry must subserve the highest ends and express or interpret the good, the true, and the beautiful."

"Art for art's sake" is for him a doctrine of the devil. All true art must be for man's service and God's glory, for, as Ruskin has taught, "all art is praise."

CHAPTER IX

THE NOVELIST

General Characteristics

GEORGE MAC DONALD is known to the world, not as poet or preacher—except to the far-seeing who have discerned the essential genius of the man—but as a novelist. His novels have made his reputation, and have been far more widely read than his poetry, in spite of the broad Scotch and the religious teaching with which they are full. The stories themselves are so interesting and the characters have such a charm of their own, that the books have made an audience far beyond the few religious people who have read them because of their message and preaching.

The plots, the characters, and the scenery have created a new and harmonious world for English readers. One of the great marvels in Mac Donald's work is that he never repeats himself—he is always fresh. There is no repetition in any of his characters; there may be a similarity between some, but all are distinct individuals.

There is no more real likeness between any of them than there is to be found among people in daily life.

There are no dummies, no troop of stage performers. There are no re-painted pictures of sky and sea, often as they are before the reader.

The moods of the landscape, or of the ocean, of the heavens by night or day, are always different. They are all as varied as the aspects of nature herself.

There is often great humour, especially in the dry Scotch conversation; plenty of mirth and gladness, but no comic element.

Mac Donald has a keen sense of the ridiculous, and loved wit and humour, enjoyed a good story, and could tell one with great gift; could share in joke and fun, rejoiced in laughter, and loved the play of children.

High comedy he admired, but low comedy, "comic cuts," and the jokes of "the funny man" were abomination, and find no place in his novels.

There are very few stage effects in his stories. He is never melodramatic. He knows the meaning of true romance, and is never happier in his work than when he is most romantic.

All his stories have the true element of romance. Each novel is a pure work of *imagination*. All the characters have elementary factors of realism, and there are no dolls or puppets; even

obscure people, who do not become great, live, not simply in descriptions about them, but in the part they play.

Then there is always the element of *surprise*, in which the natural plays a part, but room also is left for the supernatural.

This permits a use, not only of the unexpected, but of the mysterious and unaccountable; and at the back of all there is Providence, "shaping the ends" of the drama.

The unfailing factor of *love* appears in all the stories, sometimes strong and passionate, and Mac Donald is often at his best in some of his love-scenes and conversations.

While he is not blind to grosser forms of animal desire which dwell in human nature, with even streaks of higher relation where love exists, he never fails to show that *love* is the one purifying and redeeming element between man and woman. He sets forth the highest, holiest bonds of love that alone can perfect and glorify marriage. He exalts love into religion, condemning all that is false or impure with the sternest and most severe judgments.

His bad people are less successfully drawn than the good. His best work lies in the development of the good into the better until they come out ideally beautiful. He spends his highest effort in the education and growth of character; nothing is spared, either in suffering or loss, in order to

ennoble and train the children of his creation into the full possibilities of becoming true sons and daughters of the Father.

Of Mac Donald's novels it has been unjustly said, that if the plots were removed, the stories would be none the poorer. But it might be more justly maintained that the plot is as essential as the skeleton is for the body or as the body is for the soul ; it is more than the scaffold for the building up of the ideas for which the book is written ; it is in all cases an integral part of the structure, the means whereby the purpose of the story is worked out. No story is written for the sake of the plot, which is always subservient to the making of character.

There is little or no padding. Simple events become thrilling, owing to the interest felt in the characters. Nevertheless, the plot and narrative however simple, as in the *Elect Lady*, are essential for working out the life-parable they convey, and are always necessary for the development of the characters.

The main interest in the novels does not lie in " situations " and " dénouements " and " scenes," but in soul revelations, and the working out of destiny, not by hap and chance of circumstance, but by the determining conditions of will and character.

His heroes and heroines are people who are God led, and " know how sublime a thing it is

to suffer and be strong." Adversity or misfortune is their school-house. For them opportunity is the golden gate of progress by which they find the path which ends in Paradise.

Mac Donald presents to his readers a great variety of characters. His understanding of human nature—in all classes of society, from nobles to ignobles, from the real aristocracy of mind and heart to the vulgar and degraded of the upper and lower strata—is true and remarkable. His knowledge of the Bible and of Shakespeare is so great that one does not wonder that he shows the sympathetic insight of a seer when he reads the book of life and discusses the signs of the times. The Word of God *written* in nature, *spoken* in the past in all Scripture, *created* and incarnate in man, and *living* in the Eternal Son, is his chief study, and to interpret it aright is the only purpose of his novels.

He enters into the mystery of being, into the insoluble problems of sin and suffering, of love and death, with the awe-struck feelings of a reverent mystic, who is content to leave for fuller explanation what is not *ir*rational, but what is beyond our power to know, assured that there is nothing hid but what shall be revealed when we are able to see and understand.

There is a philosophy of life as well as a backbone of theology in every story he has written. He is far more of a logician and metaphysician

than many people give him credit for being. If he had not been a novelist he ought to have been a theological professor. For a theologian he is in all he does. Theology is in his very blood ; everything he writes turns to it, or revolves round it ; he cannot get away from it. He is *par excellence* the religious novelist. This is what gives him his special place in the nineteenth-century literature. He has written good English and sung sweet poetry ; he has discoursed on many themes, but his supreme mark of distinction will always be that *he has taught us God* in stories of human life. No dogmatic theologian has had the wide-spread, commanding authority in our day that Mac Donald has exercised. His religious teaching has done much to revolutionise theology in the Church, and the influence of his message has permeated into realms far beyond Church authority. He has saturated his books with religious ideas, so that from them has evaporated a spirit that has affected the atmosphere, and touched realms of thought for widest usefulness.

George Mac Donald's stories are not, in the strict sense, truly dramatic, because he cannot be other than himself ; he cannot seem to be what he is not ; he cannot assume anything. One feels the presence of the creator in all his creations, and the hand of the painter in all his portraits. The true dramatist must be without

personality; the characters he draws must be detached individuals, themselves by themselves, as if they had no author. Browning says, "The histrionic truth is in the natural lie." Mac Donald will not lie, neither can he be all things to all men; he is too true and too distinctly individual. In almost all his men and women one finds Mac Donald disguised. He is wearing other clothes, sometimes he is young, sometimes he is old, but Mac Donald, *ipsi*, peeps out in action, or reflection, or conversation.

Very great portrait painters, from Rembrandt to Watts, have shown us real likenesses of character and soul, left on canvas, but it has been only as the artists could see and feel what the men and women were. The master's mind and hand have been quite as evident as the sitter's personality. This need not detract from the worth of picture or story, only that, when and where the artist is as much revealed as the subject, the result ceases to be dramatic, however interesting the effect may be.

Tennyson projects himself more into his *dramatis personae* than Browning; and though Browning's hand is plainly seen in the forms of expression, yet, in the characters drawn, there is more, far more, of the person other than Browning. The dramatic instinct in the latter poet is much stronger than in the former. Most of the best of Mac Donald's men and women are very

Mac Donaldesque, for while full of sympathy for others, he does not wear the mask so as to hide himself. When his characters reach a certain level of illumination they become Mac Donald undisguised.

It is not David, in *David Elginbrod*, or Janet, in *Sir Gibbie*, or Clare, in *A Rough Shaking*, but the father-heart, the mother-soul, the child-spirit of George Mac Donald himself that thinks, feels, and speaks.

The poorest characters are those which have least of the author in them. Robert, in *Robert Falconer*, has much more of George Mac Donald than Mr. Gordon, who represents the author. In fact, every now and then one almost feels Robert to be autobiographical. His chief characters often pass through experiences that seem to be Mac Donald's own, magnified or minimised.

He has been the first of the modern Scotch novelists to devote his talent to the reproduction of really natural character drawn from familiar and homely types who have lived in obscure surroundings. Barrie and Ian MacLaren have given us strong, vivid pictures and portraits of Scotch life, with much humour and pathos, but Mac Donald has given us the characters of Highland men, women and children from the spiritual and religious aspect. He has drawn for us soul growth and development of character from within, under the ordinary conditions of life.

He presents to his readers some hundreds of persons, and yet there is no confusion of personality. Names are repeated, but the individuals are distinct. It would be interesting to classify all his *dramatis personæ* into groups, and study them in relation to one another. His children and his old people would form an interesting company. The poets and teachers, the toilers of the field, the shoemakers, would be worthy of consideration in detail.

But while such a series of essays could not be undertaken in the present volume, a glance may be had of some of the types of character he has given us.

Saints

His *saints* are many and varied. David Elginbrod, Robert Falconer, Mr. Marston, Andrew, Miss St. John, Janet, Wee Sir Gibbie, Clare, and a host of others are those who do the Will of God, and in doing it gain heavenly wisdom in thought and deed. They grow into the possession of great *courage*, like Dawtie, the Elect Lady, and Margaret, the daughter of David Elginbrod, and become capable of heroic deeds of loving service. The most spiritual are of course the most practical.

The most *un*selfish are the men and women of real power and influence.

The humble seers who are never disobedient to

the heavenly vision are the great teachers and apostles of the kingdom of heaven, where the pure in heart and the child-like in soul are the first and chief.

Mac Donald's strong man is not the self-made man who gets on in spite of all obstacles; not the man of iron will and determination, of great foresight and prudence; not the giant of mere intellect; he is not to be found among the rulers of this world, or the managing men of vast financial enterprises, or the successful politicians, or the great warriors or annexors of empire. But the man who bears the heaviest cross, the most patient sufferer, the meekest in heart, the most unselfish in life, the most obedient to the Father's will, the most simply loving to all men—is the strong man, for only he who is like Christ can have any abiding power or lasting strength of character.

Take, for instance, David Elginbrod, a man of obscure position, of lowly birth—though more of a true gentleman than many who have a title—without any of the worldly advantages that give power and influence. Without learning, poor in worldly goods, he never leaves the village where he got his first place, but remains a servant or steward of a small country laird. Yet this man, simply by right of his integrity of character and the possession of those vital truths that grow and cannot die, and by his silent walk with God, does

become a mighty force for righteousness. He exercises a commanding influence over all he comes across. He instructs his teacher. His daughter goes forth to impart the lessons she has learnt at his knee in an ever widening sphere.

Sinners

His *sinners* are not merely the people who transgress the moral law; not the thieves, fornicators, and drunkards of "good" or "bad" society; but pious frauds, hypocrites, and respectable go-to-church folks who do not live up to the truth and light they know and profess.

He is hardest on the smug, common, ignorant, orthodox shop-keeper of the bargaining spirit, who seeks first the kingdom of this world and its riches, but can't afford to forget God altogether.

There are so few good tradespeople to be found in his stories that the impression Mac Donald gives is, either that his knowledge of them is small and perhaps scarcely fair, or that he means to imply, that for people in trade living on profit made out of other people, in transferring goods from the maker to the consumer, there is a demoralising tendency that needs more abundant grace to ennoble that means of making a living. Whereas the life of the labourer or servant, working-man, or employee has naturally more of moral purpose to ennoble existence.

The wicked people in Mac Donald's novels are not the blackguards and criminals of the world; not the villains of the stage or the police-court. They are those who are destitute of much that is good, and possessed by the devil in some form, but they are not wholly evil; all his lost are being found.

The proud, the self-righteous, however evangelical their creed, are more to be pitied than the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, and the sensualist, who live to enjoy life up to their standard of happiness.

The worst people are the spiritually wicked, those who sin against the light, the false of heart.

Like Dante, he puts the usurers and traitors in the nethermost pit of the Inferno.

Mr. Peregrine Palmer, in *What's Mine's Mine*, is a well-drawn type of a poor, worldly, sordid, respectable brewer and distiller; no hypocrite—simply vulgar, blind to the Spirit, but a churchgoer and pious up to his light.

Mistress Conal is a sort of rough, raging, wild Celt, with a bitter power of hate, and a nature half demon and half witch; but her fidelity to her clan, her devotion to her cat, and her loyalty of nature are virtues which rank her above such men as Mr. Peregrine Palmer. Mistress Conal has much in common with Barbara Catenach—a plotting, scheming "howdie" with a strong affection for her savage dog—the bad woman of

the books *Malcolm* and *The Marquis of Lossie*. These two women form a striking illustration of the infinite pains Mac Donald takes to draw two really strong, clever personalities, so unlike and so intensely individual. They never change places for a moment, being utterly and totally distinct, although they have something that is common to both. Mrs. Catenach is the evil genius of the play, as Miss Horn is the good angel; and Mac Donald never drew a stronger, kinder, and true-as-steel woman, with more uncommon, well-developed, and distinct personality, than this noble soul, who could say, "It's a God's mercy I hae no feelings." The brave, unselfish woman, of iron nerve and tender heart, did honestly believe herself to be destitute of feeling.

Mac Donald has painted Miss Horn with the greatest care, and she is well worthy all the labour he has bestowed on her. She makes a very marked contrast to the arch-demon, Mrs. Catenach, "the pad woman."

Another type of cold, repressed, "aristocratic" cruelty is Mrs. Oldcastle, in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*. Pride and self-will completely rule her, until the good is almost, but not entirely, annihilated; and terrible is the picture of the result of her unchecked passions, in the inhuman way in which she treats her own daughters, aided and abetted by her equally cruel servant Sarah, the "white wolf," as Judy, Mrs. Oldcastle's grand-

daughter, calls her. The love Mrs. Oldcastle has for Judy is the star of hope for her final redemption. Dr. Duncan, the noble doctor of the book, tells a story of Mrs. Oldcastle, which graphically and terribly reveals the overmastering evil of passionate self-will in the nature of this woman of high birth.

"I (*i.e.*, Dr. Duncan) was led up into an old-fashioned, richly-furnished room. A great wood-fire burned on the hearth. The bed was surrounded with heavy dark curtains, in which the shadowy remains of bright colours were just visible. In the bed lay one of the loveliest young creatures I had ever seen. And, one on each side, stood two of the most dreadful-looking women I had ever beheld. Still as death, while I examined my patient, they stood, with moveless faces, one as white as the other. Only the eyes of both of them were alive. One was evidently mistress, and the other servant. The latter looked more self-contained than the former, but less determined and possibly more cruel. That both could be unkind, at least, was plain enough. There was trouble and signs of inward conflict in the eyes of the mistress. The maid gave no sign of any inside to her at all, but stood watching her mistress. A child's toy was lying in the corner of the room.

"I found the lady very weak and very feverish —a quick feeble pulse now bounding, and now

intermitting—and a restlessness in her eye which I felt contained the secret of her disorder. She kept glancing, as if involuntarily, towards the door, which would not open for all her looking, and I heard her once murmur to herself—for I was still quick of hearing then—'He won't come!' Perhaps I only saw her lips move to those words; I cannot be sure, but I am certain she said them in her heart. I prescribed for her as far as I could venture, but begged a word with her mother. She went with me into an adjoining room.

"'The lady is longing for something,' I said, not wishing to be so definite as I could have been.

"The mother made no reply. I saw her lips shut yet closer than before.

"'She is your daughter, is she not?'

"'Yes'—very decidedly.

"'Could you not find out what she wishes?'

"'Perhaps I could guess.'

"'I do not think I can do her any good till she has what she wants.'

"'Is that your mode of prescribing, doctor?' she said, tartly.

"'Yes, certainly,' I answered—'in the present case. Is she married?'

"'Yes.'

"'Has she any children?'

"'One daughter.'

" ' Let her see her, then.'

" ' She does not care to see her.'

" ' Where is her husband ? '

" ' Excuse me, doctor ; I did not send for you to ask questions, but to give advice.'

" ' And I came to ask questions, in order that I might give advice. Do you think a human being is like a clock, that can be taken to pieces, cleaned, and put together again ? '

" ' My daughter's condition is not a fit subject for jesting.'

" ' Certainly not. Send for her husband, or the undertaker, whichever you please,' I said, forgetting my manners and my temper together, for I was more irritable then than I am now, and there was something so repulsive about the woman, that I felt as if I were talking to an evil creature that for her own ends, though what I could not tell, was tormenting the dying lady.

" ' I understood you were a gentleman,—of experience and breeding.'

" ' I am not in the question, madam. It is your daughter.'

" ' She shall take your prescription.'

" ' She must see her husband, if it be possible.'

" ' It is not possible.'

" ' Why ? '

" ' I say it is not possible, and that is enough. Good-morning.'

" I could say no more at that time. I called

the next day. She was just the same, only that I knew she wanted to speak to me, and dared not, because of the presence of the two women. Her troubled eyes seemed searching mine for pity and help, and I could not tell what to do for her. There are indeed, as someone says, strongholds of injustice and wrong into which no law can enter to help.

"One afternoon, about a week after my first visit, I was sitting by her bedside, wondering what could be done to get her out of the clutches of these tormentors, who were, evidently to me, consuming her in the slow fire of her own affections, when I heard a faint noise, a rapid foot in the house so quiet before; heard doors open and shut, then a dull sort of conflict of some sort. Presently a quick step came up the oak stairs. The face of my patient flushed, and her eyes gleamed as if her soul would come out of them. Weak as she was she sat up in bed almost without an effort, and the two women darted from the room, one after the other.

"'My husband!' said the girl—for indeed she was little more in age, turning her face, almost distorted with eagerness, towards me.

"'Yes, my dear,' I said, 'I know. But you must be as still as you can, else you will be very ill. Do keep quiet.'

"'I will, I will!' she gasped, stuffing her pocket-handkerchief actually into her mouth to

prevent herself from screaming, as if that was what would hurt her. 'But go to him. They will murder him.'

"That moment I heard a cry and what sounded like an articulate imprecation, but both from a woman's voice; and the next, a young man, as fine a fellow as I ever saw—dressed like a game-keeper, but evidently a gentleman, walked into the room with a quietness that strangely contrasted with the dreadful paleness of his face, and with his disordered hair; while the two women followed, as red as he was white, and evidently in fierce wrath from a fruitless struggle with the powerful youth. He walked gently up to his wife, whose outstretched arms and face followed his face as he came round the bed to where she was at the other side, till arms, and face, and head, fell into his embrace.

"I had gone to her mother.

"'Let us have no scene now,' I said, 'or her blood will be on your head.'

"She took no notice of what I had said, but stood silently glaring, not gazing, at the pair. I feared an outburst, and had resolved, if it came, to carry her at once from the room. But in a moment more the young man, becoming uneasy at the motionlessness of his wife, lifted up her head, and glanced in her face. Seeing the look of terror in his, I hastened to him, and lifting her from him, laid her down—dead. Disease of the

heart, I believe. The mother burst into a shriek —not of horror, or grief, or remorse, but of deadly hatred.

"'Look at your work!' she cried to him, as he stood gazing in stupor on the face of the girl. 'You said she was yours, not mine; take her. You may have her now you have killed her!'

"'He may have killed her; but you have *murdered* her, madam,' I said, as I took the man by the arm, and led him away, yielding like a child. But the moment I got him out of the house, he gave a groan, and, breaking away from me, rushed down a road leading from the back of the house to the house-farm. I followed, but he had disappeared. I went on, but before I could reach the farm, I heard the gallop of a horse, and saw him tearing away at full speed along the London road. I never heard more of him, or of the story. Some women can be secret enough, I assure you."

The bad characters held up for condemnation are the worldly sordid men and women, who love self and "things," who in their hearts worship Mammon and are traffickers in God's temple of holy service. In *Mary Marston* there is the truly noble tradesman, Mr. Marston, and the ignoble shopkeepers, Mr. and Mrs. Turnbull, also Mr. Redman, the honest, but covetous commercial Nabob. The Count, in *David Elginbrod*, is an

unmitigated scoundrel. The laird, Mr. Fordyce, in *The Elect Lady*, is a good man defiled by the too fond love of earthly treasure.

The men of evil genius are much more commonplace than the good. They sink to a dead level; they are spiritually blind, and by their selfish love of the world their hearts become ossified. Ambition and love of money are two most fatal tendencies that work for unrighteous and demoralised manhood.

Robert Bruce, in *Alec Forbes*, with his vain idea of a royal ancestry, his fictitious piety and his real meanness and dishonesty, is well drawn, and stands in great contrast to Thomas Crane, the man of excellent integrity.

Shargar's brother Gordon, in *Robert Falconer*, is a brutal, low-type, sensual man of the coarse aristocracy. Beauchamp, in *Alec Forbes*, is a man of the same class, without honour and conscience, and with no redeeming qualities. Fergus, in *Sir Gibbie*, is a cruel, hard-hearted character without the instinct for nobleness; and the Laird is a bad-tempered worldling who, loving Mammon, has lost the power for true and unselfish affection, even for his gentle daughter Ginevra.

Such men simply go to their own hell to have the evil burnt out.

The Marquis of Lossie, Malcolm's father, is a more complex character, of violent passion, but not of ignoble nature. His hell began here, and

his up-waking to a better life commenced before he passed away.

Drunkards

No temperance reformer has written against the evils of strong drink more earnestly than Mac Donald.

His pictures of the drunkard's woe are as vivid, but not so coarse, as Hogarth's and Cruikshank's.

His studies of drunken people are presented with marvellous fidelity. Nearly all his drunkards have elements of true beauty in their character, and he tells their story with a Divine compassion.

The drunken shoemaker in *Robert Falconer* has fine traits of character, blunted, and shrivelled, but not wholly destroyed. The sense of conscience still lingers, with the soul of music and poetry, and the heart of goodness hidden deep in the man's nature. Yet the terrible slavery, the ensnaring passion, slowly grows in power. He is a man with noble possibilities, but dragged down, step by step, by the love of whisky; not without resistance and struggle does he sink, but gradually the evil fascination becomes stronger than the weakening will, and good intentions are silenced until there is no hope of recovery, this side the poor drunkard's grave.

Mr. Cupples, in *Alec Forbes*, is a man the reader cannot help liking at once. He is an able scholar,

the librarian of the University, with whom the love of drink has begun its moral ruin and degradation. He knows the vicious influence of the spell of whisky, and his one great desire is to save Alec from falling under the curse. He bids him promise never to touch it; and though still drinking hard himself, his zeal to keep Alec from tasting it is worthy the devotion of an abstaining Temperance advocate. When he discovers that Alec has begun to go down the hill and has broken his promise, then comes the awful struggle, of love for Alec or the gratification of his own appetite. Love wins, and for the lad's sake he gives up the drink himself, and in saving Alec finds salvation.

In *Sir Gibbie* the picture of the evils of drink is drawn with exquisite tenderness and yet terrible severity. The first victim is the father of wee Sir Gibbie, whom the child lovingly cares for and nightly guides from the public house, then puts him to bed and finds a haven of rest in the bosom of the wretched drunkard, unconscious of his father's sin, only full of love.

After his father's death the lad grows up to have divine pity for drunkards until they are his special care, and he their guardian angel. His severity against drink and his righteous hatred of all contact with it is the outcome not only of his early experience, but of his mature judgment formed against the cause of all its misery. When

wealth and title become his, he makes drunkards his sacred charge; and yet, with all his loving pity for them, he will not let any, whilst they are intoxicated, come into his "Refuge-home."

The gradual decline of Mistress Croale—a coarse woman who had been kind to Gibbie when he was a little lonely street arab—is realised by Gibbie in all its terrible loss and misery with bitter grief, and the effort he makes for her redemption is one of the most beautiful and noble that could be conceived. The pledge to secure her fidelity; her struggle, failure, and shame; the punishment he metes out to her in love; his patience and affection, that find response in penitence and sorrow for the past, and love to Gibbie that is finally triumphant and overcomes the evil, are all told with a wonderfully subtle skill and power. But for a small picture, there is nothing to surpass the description given in the chapter called "The Houseless":—

"One night the youths" (Sir Gibbie and Donal) "had been out for a long walk, and came back to the city late, after the shops were shut. . . . Not a soul was visible in the dingy region through which they now approached their lodging, when round a corner, moving like a shadow, came, soft-pacing, a ghostly woman in rags, with a white, worn face, and the largest black eyes, it seemed to the youths, that they had ever seen—an apparition of awe and grief and wonder. To

compare a great thing with a small, she was to their eyes as a ruined, desecrated shrine to the eyes of the saint's own peculiar worshipper. I may compare her to what I please, great or small—to a sapphire set in tin, to an angel with draggled feathers; for far beyond all comparison is that temple of the Holy Ghost in the desert—a woman in wretchedness and rags. She carried her puny baby rolled hard in the corner of her scrap of black shawl. To the youths a sea of trouble looked out of those wild eyes. As she drew near them, she hesitated; half stopped, and put out a hand from under the shawl—stretched out no arm, held out only a hand from the wrist, white against the night. Donal had no money. Gibbie had a shilling. The hand closed upon it, a gleam crossed the sad face, and a murmur of thanks fluttered from the thin lips as she walked on her way. The youths breathed deep, and felt a little relieved, but only a little. The thought of the woman wandering in the dark and the fog and the night, was a sickness at their hearts. . . . Along the deserted streets they followed her with their eyes, the one living thing, fading away from lamp to lamp; and when they could see her no farther, followed her with their feet; they could not bear to lose sight of her. But they kept just on the verge of vision, for they did not want her to know the espial of their love. Suddenly she disappeared, and keeping their eyes on the spot

as well as they could, they found when they reached it a little shop, with a red curtain, half torn down, across the glass door of it. A dim oil lamp was burning within. It looked like a rag-shop, dirty and dreadful. There she stood, while a woman with a bloated face, looking to Donal like a feeder of hell-swine, took from some secret hole underneath, a bottle which seemed to Gibbie the very one his father used to drink from. He would have rushed in and dashed it from her hand, but Donal withheld him.

"'Hoots,' he said, 'we canna follow her a' nicht; an' gin we did, what better wad she be i' the mornin'? Lat her be, puir thing!'"

"She received the whisky in a broken tea-cup, swallowed some of it eagerly, then, to the horror of the youths, put some of it into the mouth of her child from her own. Draining the last drop from the cup, she set it quietly down, turned, and without a word spoken, for she had paid beforehand, came out, her face looking just as white and thin as before, but having another expression in the eyes of it. At the sight Donal's wisdom forsook him.

"'Eh, wuman,' he cried, 'yon wasna what ye hed the shillin' for!'"

"'Ye said naething,' answered the poor creature, humbly, and walked on, hanging her head and pressing her baby to her bosom.

"The boys looked at each other.

" 'That wasna the gait yer shillin' sud hae gane, Gibbie,' said Donal. ' It's clear it winna du to gie shillin's to sic like as her. Wha kens but the hunger an' the caul', an' the want o' whisky may be the wuman's evil things here, 'at she may 'scape the hell-fire o' the rich man hereafter ? '

" He stopped, for Gibbie was weeping. The woman and her child he would have taken to his very heart, and could do nothing for them. Love seemed helpless, for money was useless. It set him thinking much, and the result appeared. From that hour the case of the homeless haunted his heart and brain and imagination . . . and what he discovered found, as always, its first utterance in action."

The abstainers described by Mac Donald are of the noble type. Old Mrs. Falconer, Mrs. Macruadh and her sons, and Sir Gibbie. All are filled with holy enthusiasm against the curse of alcohol.

He was not himself an abstainer ; he believed that the highest law is self-control, not abstinence, unless that is necessary for control. But he recognised the absolute necessity, for those whose temptation it is, to do without it entirely, and valued the work done by the extreme advocates of temperance. He honours those who uncompromisingly will not touch or taste strong drink, but follows, what to his own conscience is the perfect law of liberty—the use without abuse.

When staying with temperance friends who did

not keep any intoxicating drink in the house, he said, with a humorous smile, to Mrs. Bubier, who had called to see him, when afternoon tea was offered, "Isn't it a mercy our host does not forbid us *this*?"

He was temperate in all things, could be grateful for the simplest fare, and just as gracefully thankful if any little delicacy was especially prepared for him. He had the heart of contentment that knows how to be poor and how to abound, as he knew the blessedness of giving and of receiving.

CHAPTER X

THE NOVELIST

Poetic Interpretation of Nature

Nature

All Mac Donald's stories are set in harmonious accompaniments. The scenery is generally a sympathetic treatment of nature that is sometimes symbolic, and even illustrative of the human experiences in the drama. The descriptions of nature are often more vivid than those of persons.

He goes to nature, as Wordsworth did, to be taken into her moods, and loses himself in her heart and spirit.

The inwardness of nature, her very soul, has its message, seen and felt. Nothing is insignificant.

Neither Constable nor Corot ever enjoyed the play of summer breeze in thick foliage, or in thin branches waving against a grey winter sky, with more appreciation than Mac Donald. His love of nature is universal. He can paint landscapes

with the skill of an artist in wide sweeps of country or in small picturesque details. The sea especially has a great charm for him with all its moods and varied aspects, from the peace of its calm bosom and lapping ripples on the sand to the wrath of the hurricane and its mountain-billows breaking on the crags and cliffs.

He has watched the sky by day and night, and is Turneresque in his seizure of some passing pageant of cloud and making it a permanent coloured picture in the story.

The clear light or the veiling mist have for him their loveliness.

He knows the blessedness of the shadows and of the darkness.

The fenceless road, the open way, the trackless heath with its sense of space, are his delight.

The woods, pine-forests, stately parks, and wayside trees give him the pleasure a poet alone can enjoy.

He is at home among the hills and the mountains, from sunny top to shadowed valley and breezy slope.

In *The Princess and Curdie*, at the commencement of the story, there is a fine description of the awe the mountains can inspire, with the reason that awakens this feeling.

When he speaks of the solemn, silent solitude to be discovered in the heart of mountain scenery it is with the reverent joy of one who has been

there and known the sacred serenity of the " holy of holies " in the vast, wide expanse of earth and sky.

He dwells much on the wind, always to him like the breath of God, from its gentlest embrace to its mightiest expelling force and driving power.

He lingers over the sounds of nature in wave and stream, in waterfall or raindrops ; the wind-voices in tree-tops or hedge-row, the sigh on the heather or the rustle in the corn ; all these alike speak to him.

He marks the likeness between the music of wind and of water, and mentions how difficult it is to distinguish, at a distance, the sound of falling water from steady rushing wind in foliage.

He observes the difference of the wind through the still pines and in the fluttering leaves of other trees.

The scents of nature do not escape his keen sense ; they come laden with memories and suggestions.

The country life and farm-work, especially in Scotland, from the ploughing and sowing to the hay and wheat harvest, have, like the flowers of garden and field and the fruit of the orchards, points of deep interest.

All the seasons are right and beautiful ; and the more terrible signs of nature have for Mac Donald their grandeur and their splendour.

The account of the spates in *Sir Gibbie* and

in *Alec Forbes*, the flood in *Paul Faber*, and the storm and shipwreck in *The Seaboard Parish*, are impressive.

The thunder-storms are many and are full of meaning ; it would seem as if Mac Donald enjoyed them, as he does an oratorio.

The earthquake so well described in *A Rough Shaking* was drawn from personal experience in Bordighera ; the reader can share in the agonising fear, and helplessness of human endeavour, and realise the greatness of faith that rests in the Shelter that cannot be shaken.

No one has given more powerful and realistic descriptions of snowstorms, unless it be Tolstoi. The account of one in *Heather and Snow* is very fine. Also the great snowfall in *David Elginbrod* is awesome ; but the most remarkable and memorable is the one told of in *Castle Warlock* ; in fact, after having once read it, to recall the book is to remember the white expanse that almost buried the castle and seemed to blot out every feature from the land.

Animals

With this great love of nature and every living thing Mac Donald has a most lovely regard for all the creatures of God. If man is made only a little lower than the angels, then the animals are only a little lower than man, and much akin to human nature, and are worthy of the highest

treatment as servants of man, and therefore of God. In almost all his novels some animals are introduced, and they often form an integral part of the story. They have character, and act and re-act in revealing and developing the characters of the men and women.

How suggestive is the breaking-in of the two plough-bulls by Alister before Mercy and Christian, and the conversation that follows, in *What's Mine's Mine*! What a keynote it is to the whole history recorded in the book! What pathos in the death of the stag! What strange affinity between Mistress Conal and her cat!

The place occupied by Keltie, in *Malcolm* and *The Marquis of Lossie* is greater than many of the minor characters. Malcolm's treatment of this untamable and fiery mare is one of the most significant features in both books.

Mrs. Catenach's fierce dog is symbolic of much; the two are a pair of creatures that must be taken together, as Steenie and his dog and Kirsty and her horse in *Heather and Snow*.

The horse Diamond, in *At the Back of the North Wind*, and Snowball, in *Sir Gibbie*, are almost dramatic personages in the drama.

In *The Wise Woman*, Prince the sheep-dog is set to watch poor Rosamond. He plays the part of minding the girl, and keeps her from running away until they become friends.

Many of our troubles in life are like the

shepherd-dog that guards the sheep and keeps them in the fold of the Great Good Shepherd.

This is a favourite theory with Mac Donald, which he works out in many of his stories. When the sheep stray from the flock, then the shepherd sends the dog to bring them home. So God sends the sheep-dogs of heaven, under the names of "trial" and "distress," to find us out when we have wandered, and drive us back again to the safe shelter of the "one fold" where the many flocks are gathered.

The charger Constance, in *The Portent*, and the mare Lady, with Dorothy's dog Marquis, in *St. Michael and St. George*—one of the faithful and true servants with instinct and intelligence that are more valuable than some men's reason—cannot be forgotten.

In *A Rough Shaking* the taming of the bull Nimrod, and Clare's experience in the menagerie, are instances of how the spirit of Christ in a boy can master and control the wildest animal nature and passions so that they can be subdued.

Ruskin has said, all that paganism could do was to slay the Nemean Lion; what Christianity does is to tame it and make it the guardian of our shores, like the heraldic Lion of St. Mark, at Venice.

Mac Donald's teaching is in harmony with the old promise to the disciples "They shall take up serpents"; and with Burne-Jones's suggestion, in

his picture of "Faith," that the deadly viper may be transformed, by the spirit of Christianity, so that it becomes the ornament and protector of our faith.

Mac Donald's affection for animals was very remarkable; he understood them and they loved him. He knew some wonderful stories about dogs and horses. He believes some of the best are not inferior to the lower order of men; in fact he would say, a good dog is better than a bad man in his service to society. No member of the Royal Humane Society is a more valiant and chivalrous friend to the dumb creation. And in his kindly treatment of them he is much akin to St. Francis of Assisi, when he called the birds his brothers and sisters.

He introduces them, not accidentally but with purpose, continually into his stories, and they teach some lessons that can be learnt from no other source. He sees no reason why their life should end with death. For him it is a quite possible belief that immortality may be theirs, believing, with Tennyson,

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroy'd,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
>
> "That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain."

The Infirm of Body

There is something very rare and profoundly touching in MacDonald's treatment of human infirmity, whether of body or of mind. Those bereft of any of the five senses, or afflicted in limb, are the objects of his finest regard.

Their deprivation and suffering are for the calling out of new mercy, to be the occasion of special tenderness.

The deformed or crippled are here for distinct ministry—to teach a hard and often cruel world the blessedness of service ; for if it is more blessed to give than to receive, it must be still more so to minister than to be ministered unto.

The pain-bearers are the vicarious sufferers of humanity ; by their endurance they are contributing to the world's redemption, and by willingly submitting to their lot they are " partakers of Christ's sufferings."

Euphra, in *David Elginbrod*, speaking to Margaret before she dies, says :

" I begin to like my lameness, I think."

" Why, dear ? " asks Margaret.

" Why, just because God made it, and bade me bear it. May I not think it is a mark on me from His hand ? "

" Yes, I think so," said Margaret.

" Why do you think it came on me ? "

"To walk back to Him with, dear," said Margaret.

"Yes, yes; I see it all," replied Euphra.

Wee Sir Gibbie could not have been the beautiful character he was, without his dumbness. His heroic life of ministry to others, his nimble ways, active mind, and spiritual soul were perfected through his physical disability.

Beautiful indeed are the two dwarfs in *Wingfold*, *Curate*, and *Paul Faber*, Joseph Polworth and his niece Rachel, whose lives were full of thankfulness for their deformity because they had learnt to know God's will and tried to do it in the spirit of His Son. Their loveliness of character shines, not in spite of, but because of, the seeming bodily defect, as the Divine features glowed out of the "marred countenance."

The soul of goodness transforms the poor garment of flesh. They are angels of mercy clad in raiments of ugliness, redeeming the time and place wherein they lived.

The Infirm of Mind

In *What's Mine's Mine*, "Rob of the angels" and the deaf and dumb "Hector of the stags," to whom Rob is guide and ears, are a very remarkable pair. Their mutual attachment and loyalty are wonderful. The partially disordered brain of Rob, with its keenness of mother-wit

and marvellous sharpness of instinct, that could make Hector understand his meaning, are revealed with magic skill.

It is for those who are of infirm mind that MacDonald shows even more consideration than for those afflicted in body. He sets a halo of sanctity around them with a hand of gentleness and love that is quite unique. He sees them to be the frail and imperfect flowers of human life sent for peculiar care in the Father's earthly garden, and none the less beautiful for love because of their delicacy or feebleness of mind and brain.

The "mad Laird," with Phemy's devoted protection, is one of the chief characters of interest in *Malcolm*, with his oft-repeated cry, "I dinna ken whaur I came frae," and his pathetic prayer to the "Father o' lichts."

The half-witted Wandering Willie who played the bag-pipes, in *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood*, is another creation of MacDonald's brain that deserves to be mentioned. And the fool, in *St. Michael and St. George*, must not be forgotten, with his fear, his odd shrewdness, and subtle cunning.

The idiot in *The Wow o' Rivven* is a study that deserves remark. He was called "the Colonel," and was jeered at, mocked, and tortured by the boys. This "tatter of humanity" would continually repeat the refrain

"Come hame, come hame!" The poor idiot had been left a lonely infant on the moors. For seventy years the parish had taken care of him, and as he grew up many of the townspeople were kind to him and employed him in fetching water for them from the river. "He lived a life without aim, and apparently to no purpose; in this resembling most of his more gifted fellow-men, who with all the tools and materials necessary for building a noble mansion are yet content with a clay hut."

One day a savage bull-dog flew at the daft man and bit him. Elsie, sister to the owner of the dog, ran to the rescue, when the dog seized her by the arm. A doctor passing took the beast by the throat, dashed him to the ground, carried Elsie into the house, and dressed the wound, while far down the street came the iambic cry of the fool, "Come hame, come hame!"

Once, in the churchyard, Elsie heard the sound of a tolling bell, and suddenly saw the idiot and heard him say, "Come hame, come hame! The wow, the wow!" Then she understood the whole meaning of the words. "The wow, the wow!" was the passing knell, and what it said was, "Come hame, come hame!" To her the words came with soothing gentleness in her sad life; it was like a voice calling the children of the Unseen to come home.

Soon after the fool began to fail; a violent cold

brought him at last near his end. Elsie one day ventured to go and see him. When she entered the miserable room where he lay he held out his hand and smiled, saying, "I'm gaein' to the wow, nae to come back again." . . . "The next morning he was waked by friendly death from the long sleep of this world's night."

In time Elsie's turn came, after long weakness and disease.

One still night of summer the nurse who watched heard her murmur in her sleep, "I hear it: come hame—come hame! I'm comin', I'm comin'—I'm gaein' hame to the wow, nae to come back"; and soon after passed away.

Side by side the aged fool and the young maiden were laid to rest; for the bell called them, and they obeyed.

"Still the old bell hangs in the old gable; and whenever another is borne to the old churchyard, it keeps calling to those who are left behind, with the same sad, but friendly and unchanging voice—"Come hame! come hame! come hame!"

The Doctors

The doctors are all men of interest. The healing ministry is akin to the teaching, and does tend to draw out the best in man.

Dr. Anderson, in *Robert Falconer*, is a fine and

beautiful saviour of body and soul—unselfish, simple, and most noble in his humble generosity.

Dr. Duncan, in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*, is a true and excellent man who makes his practice a means of high and blessed usefulness.

Dr. Mather, in *Paul Faber*, is not a bad sort, but there is a touch of the humbug about him.

The Doctor most fully painted and completely revealed is Paul Faber, surgeon. He is more statuesque in outline and detail than any other character. He is the strongest man outside the company of saints.

The Parsons

In this portrait-gallery of Mac Donald's genius, one of the most instructive and interesting of the groups is the parsons. Among them are to be seen many Scotch and English preachers and pastors. Some are very slightly sketched in profile, some are miniatures, some are vignettes, some are three-quarter pictures, and others are just snap-shots of the camera.

They are of all shades of opinion. Some of the Nonconformists are very realistic in their orthodoxy, their poverty of soul, and want of culture.

Among the Presbyterians, sedate and sound, shabby and learned, narrow and hard, there is also the kind-hearted Rev. Mr. Cowie, in *Alec Forbes*, with his parish work engaging all his

energy, but quite unable to give poor Annie any true spiritual help in her time of need. Also the respectable Mr. Sclater, in *Sir Gibbie*, who sadly needed to have his eyes opened to the thither side of life, but whose conscience was so awakened by Gibbie's rebuke that the New Testament was removed from the drawing-room. There is nothing finer in the story than where Gibbie, unable to understand Mr. Sclater's uncontrolled anger, thinks by his violence of speech that he must be drunk, and follows him home to see that no evil shall befall him while under the supposed influence of drink. The father of Ranald Bannerman is an excellent type of divine at home and in the parish. Also the kind clergyman in *A Rough Shaking* is worthy of remembrance.

The Rev. Mr. Bevis, Wingfold's vicar, is a good, honest, idle, worldly parson who thinks that if he gets a good curate to preach and look after the parish, he has done his duty. But he hears Wingfold preach, and although his wife is much displeased by the discourse, he has conscience and honour enough to feel the message true, and to acknowledge that his idea of discharging the trust laid on him as vicar is unworthy, and from that time begins ascending.

In *The Elect Lady* reference is made to the simple-hearted pastor who could not take care of himself; "he left God to take care of him, that he might be free to work for God."

The parsons as a body are very severely treated, probably because of their bigotry and blindness to the light and their want of charity while living in direct association with the Word of God.

But the full-length picture of the Rev. Mr. Walton, in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*, and *The Seaboard Parish*, represents an ideal clergyman in the Church of England. And Wingfold, the curate, is a noble type of true man, a servant of God and man, who wins the respect of Nonconformists and even of unbelievers.

Music and Painting

The artistic side of Mac Donald's nature is evinced in his treatment of music. He enters into the true musician's feelings, and all he has to say on vocal or instrumental music might be the utterance of an experienced musical critic.

His insight into pictures is as great ; he knows the real painter, and why his work is good. What is told us about Lenorme, the portrait painter in *The Marquis of Lossie*, and Mr. Percival in *The Seaboard Parish*, and the conversations about pictures, if they do not reveal a technical knowledge of Art, show how true and right are Mac Donald's judgments in that realm, and that his power to see the good, the true, and the beautiful is as profound as it is correct.

Humour

The humour in his books does not lie in funny scenes or in broad mirth. It is dry, deep, subtle humour that cannot be repressed, because it exists in the men and women he draws. It is never forced and grotesque, but natural and delightful, with a delicate flavour all its own. And it abounds much more in the Scotch books than in the English.

Robert Falconer's nimble speech and some of Shargar's sayings bring the smile that cannot be repressed. The keenest wit is found in all his books.

Side by side with all the pathos in *Sir Gibbie* and in *Castle Warlock* there is this bright flow of vivid humour.

MacDonald's humour is like the lovely incipient smile in the Venus of the Louvre ; it is growing into laughter, but does not break into audible sound.

He exhibits a great interest in jewels and old watches. The subject of gems forms a centre around which grows the plot of the story in *David Elginbrod*, *Castle Warlock*, and *The Elect Lady*.

Of all the distinguishing characteristic factors of his books, the many and exquisite prayers to

be found scattered throughout them are to some of his readers the most precious devotional inheritance that his novels bequeath. They are all worthy to be collected and placed in a volume for daily and constant meditation. They are the truest expression of the "soul's desire," and reveal not only the deep need of the characters who breathe them, but still more the heart of piety in the writer who inspires them.

CHAPTER XI

THE NOVELIST

Scotch Stories

"David Elginbrod," 1863; "The Portent," 1864; "Alec Forbes," 1865; Robert Falconer," 1868; "Malcolm," 1875; "The Marquis of Lossie," 1877; "Sir Gibbie," 1879; "Castle Warlock," 1882; "Donal Grant," 1883; "What's Mine's Mine," 1886; "The Elect Lady," 1888; "Heather and Snow," 1893; "Salted with Fire," 1897.

In 1863 *David Elginbrod* appeared, and is the first and most powerful of Mac Donald's stories. In it the reader is introduced to Robert Falconer for the first time.

Much of the popular interest in the book lies in the complications that arise from the reputed ghost stories, and the evil machinations of Funkelstein, one of the worst types of character that Mac Donald has drawn.

He is the striking contrast to David Elginbrod, a man of almost perfect excellence in heart and mind, in spiritual vision and holy living.

Funkelstein, a shady Count, is the type of character that impersonates the man who deals in the black art.

David is the sharp antithesis, the man who lives in the light, who works only for the glory of God, of humble but noble pedigree. He is a great man in the wonderful influence he exercises. He only appears in about a third of the story, but he dominates the whole book. His spirit and teaching reappear in Margaret, and are the source of Euphra's victory over the evil bondage of the Count, and become for Hugh, the tutor, the forces that make him what he finally became ; for he is taught by him the "way of life."

All the best in the book radiates from the good man who walks with God, and vanishes from earth like Enoch because "God took him." The poetry of the simple life in Turriepuffit is ideal in its beauty and affection.

David Elginbrod is the strongest of Mac Donald's stories in light and shade of character, and presents the finest revelations of sensitive emotion in man and woman.

The Portent was published in 1864. It is dedicated to Mac Donald's friend, Duncan McColl, R.N., of Huntly, and written at Kensington. Mac Donald calls it a romance or a daydream "founded on second sight, the belief in which was common to our ancestors."

The story is very weird and wonderfully delicate in tone and colour. It is told in the first person, and although founded on the marvellous is true

to human nature and to itself. It is most refined in its vivid sensationalism, and most beautiful is the love-making. It reads as if it might be true, so powerful and well sustained is the force of imagination. The old nurse Margaret and Lady Alice are shadowy characters of true women that have real significance.

Strange and awesome as some of the scenes are, and full of ominous terrors which " the clank of the horse-shoe " implies, there is no over-weight of tragedy, for somehow the reader is led to expect a happy ending, and that the portent of fear, which casts a foreboding gloom, is to be banished and vanquished by the sweet power of all-conquering love, which grows in bright hope to the joyful end.

Lady Alice, the somnambulist, full of great sympathy and remarkable understanding, is the first of many characters, beset with a form of mental or nervous disease, that appear in other stories.

Alec Forbes, published in 1865. Here the stage is crowded with characters ; but just as Alec and Annie hold the foremost place of interest in the village school, the miniature place of education, so they do, on to the story's end, in the larger life of the world.

The schoolmaster, Mr. Malison, and the parson, Mr. Cowie, would seem like life-portraits. Mr.

Malison's failure in the pulpit, when the parson was away, and the lesson he learnt the next day, when the children he had thrashed till they writhed in torture, brought their flower-offerings as if his effort had been a triumphant success, is indeed cleverly and beautifully described; this blessed failure taught mercy for the failures of others and loosed the millstone from round his neck.

Robert Falconer first appeared in *The Argosy*, and was published separately in 1868, several books having been published in the interval. It soon became perhaps the best known of all Mac Donald's stories, and it will always hold its place as one of the noblest and finest studies of character.

The principal *dramatis personae* are wonderfully well drawn. The two chief women, Mrs. Falconer and Miss St. John, are both remarkable personalities.

Mrs. Falconer is a severely grand type, so vividly sketched that one feels it is a portrait taken from life, and was probably a representation of the author's own grandmother, and is as evidently true a picture in words as the portrait of Rembrandt's mother is in colour. Mrs. Macruadh, in *What's Mine's Mine*, has much in common with Mrs. Falconer. Both are intense in their hatred of drink, and both alike narrow

in their religious views, brought up on the "Shorter Catechism"; women of great faith and prayer, good and true to the heart's core, reticent and reserved, revealing the best results of old-fashioned Calvinistic piety. And Mac Donald shows in both what the theology, from which he so widely differed, could do for the making of strong character, where the heart was right with God.

But both women have a distinct personality, and are as unlike each other as the oak and the elm.

Mrs. Macruadh is more of the high-born lady, with the power to rule and of larger intellectual sympathies; with more of gentleness in her strength.

Mrs. Falconer is more lonely, repressed, and intense; her faith, untouched by the influence of genius, is harder and sterner. She has no fine sympathy with childhood, no love of nature or music; but her undying, agonising love for her son burnt like an unconsuming flame. She is a great contrast to Miss St. John, who is one of the purest of saints, with a soul always atune to the music she loves.

Robert's boyhood is full of charm. The kite-play, and his devotion to the violin, are told with revelations of character that Mac Donald never surpassed. The burning of Robert's violin, the only relic he had of his father, is a tragedy

that is simply terrible in its realism ; and the manner in which Robert bears it is a hint of the enormous capacity of his power of endurance that is strikingly developed in after days.

Beautiful is the fidelity of Shargar, the friend of Robert, and steady the growth of his education from ragged urchin to soldier gentleman.

Ericson the poet, the sceptic, the scholar, the genius, stands out one of the most pathetic figures ever drawn by Mac Donald.

Gracious indeed is the graphic outline of the good Dr. Anderson, and the delicacy of his unselfish life and the refinement of his trustful generosity.

What glimpses we get into the local life of the little town! The peep into "The Boar's Head," kept by the Miss Napiers ; the realistic personality of "Dooble Sammy," the drunken shoemaker with the soul of a true musician ; the garret, and the discoveries in it ; and Betty, with her fear of her age being known, but with genuine loyalty and kindness of heart, are all factors that live.

The story is full of lovely comments. Take the one instance where Robert, by Ericson's bed-side, makes his vow to seek his father, and yet had not realised "that there was One who in the face of the fact" [of human suffering], "and in recognition of it, had dared to say, 'Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without

your Father.' The sparrow does fall—but He who sees it is yet the Father. And we know only the fall, and not the sparrow."

The sealing up of the door that communicated with the next house, and was the gate of Paradise to Robert, is a touch of genius. With the vanishing of this door of bliss from the earth, Robert's boyhood passes into youth.

The death of Ericson closed the door of his youth and opened the gate of manhood. Then he goes out into solitude, and in some lonely spot among the Alps he learns the great lesson that to *do* the will of God is the way of peace and the way to the Father; hence the time for action. Then follows the life in London, and the work among the poor; the daily search for his father in the slums of the great city, with its awful revelations.

So that before the "bitter cry" had reached the heart of the Churches, or there had been any organised Christian effort to help and elevate the neglected, this account of East End life roused the consciences of many earnest people, and had an immense influence in kindling enthusiasm for individual service, where the need of Christian work was greatest.

F. D. Maurice's inauguration of the Working-men's College, with his band of helpers, had begun to turn public attention in the right direction. Charles Kingsley had opened the way

for Christian men to think seriously about the social condition of the masses. James Hinton and Arnold Toynbee were preaching and living the Gospel of altruism; but the story of Robert Falconer, and his personal ministry in the midst of squalor and filth and sin, reached a wider circle of hearers, and touched the consciences of the comfortable middle-class in a way no preacher or writer had done before.

Robert's method of dealing with the great problem was so simple, so practical, so fresh, and yet so Christ-like, that many wondered why the plan had not been tried before.

Robert, with his infinite trust in God, and his treatment of all men as brothers, with his abounding hope of the possibilities of social redemption by the power of personal influence, lit a torch-light that roused the hearts of men to behold a new ideal when they were almost filled with despair at the dark outlook of the uneducated condition of the poor of our great city.

Robert Falconer illustrates the Divine method of dealing with the most hopeless. The way in which he enlists the interest and co-operation of Mr. De Fleuri, the Clerkenwell silk-weaver, Agnostic though he was, into a fellow-worker, is a touching and beautiful incident in the story.

Mac Donald introduces himself into the novel under the name of Mr. Gordon. This is a little inartistic, but gives an element of realism that

clinches the veracity of the otherwise too idealistic aspect of Robert's ministry, so wonderfully rewarded by the finding of his father, which all through the reader feels to be the inevitable conclusion.

The "Brown Letter," written by Robert's mother with her dying hand to the husband who had forsaken her, is such a revelation of the woman that it almost accounts for the nobility of Robert's character. The use Robert makes of the violin while the letter is being read by his father is one of those strokes of genius that makes the music not merely an accompaniment of the drama, but helps its expression and interpretation.

The meeting of Robert, his father, and his grandmother is a fit conclusion ; for the salvation of the father is worth all the cost and sacrifice made by the mother and son.

Ericson's poetry, probably that of John Hill Mac Donald, is very like that which is to be found in *The Threefold Cord*, for while it is often wild and weird, and sometimes raw and unfinished, and infinitely sad and mysterious, it is poetry with the true and *un*common ring of rhythmic motion and sweet melody, and reveals a soul of a high order.

In *Malcolm* (published in 1875) we have a story evidently set in familiar scenes. The coast of Banffshire is vividly described.

The scene in *Malcolm*, like that of its sequel, *The Marquis of Lossie*, is laid in and about Cullen, a charming little fishing-town situated on a bluff and rock-bound part of the coast. Here Mac Donald spent several summers, while gathering material for his novel, and was on very friendly terms with a number of the fishermen there, and sometimes went out with them in their boats to sea. Hence the accuracy of the local colour which is so prominent a feature all through *Malcolm*.

The man Malcolm is the son of the Marquis of Lossie, but does not know that he is anything more than a fisherman. He has marked intellectual power, and is a gentleman by nature and by birth, though brought up among the simple fisher-folk. He becomes the servant to his own father, though neither of them know it.

The growth of Malcolm's character, and the influence he exercises on the Laird and his daughter, are well narrated. Intense personality marks all the people in the book ; everybody is a real character. The sea accompaniments to the story are fine. Duncan and his bag-pipes, Keltie the horse, *Psyche*, the cutter, the house and its ghost story, are all striking features. There is little bye-play to distract attention ; the many people introduced all tend to strengthen and develop the progress of the story.

One feels a little disappointed that Lady

Florimel does not sooner grow into a nobler woman after all her education under Malcolm. The clever way in which she breaks the Laird of swearing before her, by always repeating his language, shows such a touch of genius that one expects she must become a great reformer.

The story of *Malcolm* ends with the hero knowing he is the Marquis's son and heir. *The Marquis of Lossie* takes up the narrative from this point, and tells how Malcolm still continues in the position of servant to Lady Florimel in order to protect her as her brother, but this is impossible while she still believes him to be only her groom.

The influences that surrounded her tend to the deterioration of her character, but side by side there is the awakening and development of Lady Clementina under the fostering care of Malcolm. The intercourse and conversation, though sometimes unlikely, are still most beautiful.

Of course it is the unexpected that happens, and Lady Clementina does disclose her love for Malcolm before he dares to ask it, and before she knows that he is a lord. The story ends perhaps a little too theatrically and mechanically, but the way in which this servant of man has followed The Servant of All, and grows into being a fellow-servant and worker together with God, makes the two stories a blessed parable of noble work and holy service for all who read their pages.

In 1879 *Sir Gibbie* was published. This book has a special charm. There is a peculiar halo of saintliness about Wee Sir Gibbie, both as child and man. Just as the man in the Gospel was born blind in order that the works of God should be made manifest, so Sir Gibbie was born mute.

Mac Donald sees in human infirmity a beautiful sacredness. Not only is the deprivation of *one* sense the reason for extra keenness in the others, but through the loss there comes a revelation of more abundant blessing.

The natural lovingness, the eagerness to serve, the spiritual perception and lofty grace of the child Gibbie, and the purity and beauty of his character are unsurpassed in any of Mac Donald's works.

The love of God shines through Sir Gibbie like sunshine through a clear glass. The all-conquering power of affection in the life of the boy is a true exposition of the prophecy, "A little child shall lead them."

Janet is another of the finely drawn women saints with the mother-heart.

"The Rev. and poor Mr. Sclater" and his more discerning wife are inimitable with their respect for money and position, common to the most *un*christian, and about such people Mac Donald meditates: "We are not told that the Master made the smallest use of money for His ends. When He paid the Temple rate, He did it to

avoid giving offence; and He defended the woman who divinely wasted it. Ten times more grace and magnanimity would be needed wisely and lovingly to avoid making a fortune than it takes to spend one for what are called good objects when it is made."

Castle Warlock is one of the loveliest of Mac Donald's stories for spiritual wisdom. He calls it "A Homely Romance," and dedicates it to Mrs. Russell Gurney, who was a dear and true friend.

> "A broken tale of endless things,
> Take, lady: thou art not of those
> Who in what vale a fountain springs,
> Would have its journey close.
>
> "Countless beginnings, fair first parts,
> Leap to the light, and shining flow;
> All broken things, or toys or hearts,
> Are mended where they go.
>
> "Then down thy stream, with hope-filled sail,
> Float faithful, fearless on, loved friend;
> 'Tis God that has begun the tale,
> And does not mean to end.
>
> "BORDIGHERA, *March*, 1882."

It is the beautiful story of how loss and poverty can bring heavenly riches and lasting blessings.

The nobleness of Cosmo and the fidelity of Grizzie are delightful. It is difficult to say which

is the more charming, the Laird, in his fidelity to his position as nobleman and master, or Grizzie, equally faithful in her servitude.

The grim old castle, the terrible snow-storm, and the hard, bare, bleak country are features that live long after the book has been put aside.

Cosmo's meek submission to his severe lot is like the grace of a winter sunset that throws its glory over wet pools or waste of fallen snow.

Mac Donald tells a story about this work of imagination that is as curious as it is true.

Some Americans from the Far West wrote to him to say their name was Warlock, and they therefore thought that they must have come from the original stock told of in the book, and after thanking him for the story, which they had enjoyed, said they would like to have the exact address of the home of their probable ancestors, and to know if there were any of their relatives still living. They would be grateful if he would tell them what had become of " the horse " that had played so important a part in the plot of the tale.

Donal Grant, published in 1883, is a sequel to *Sir Gibbie*, and one of Mac Donald's strongest stories. Andrew, the shoemaker and seer, is a great man, a humble religious genius, whose thought and speech on sacred things are a rich mine of wealth.

The keynote of the book is in the opening chapter, where Donal, after his first great disappointment, sits by the wayside and says :

" But there's ae question I maun sattle afore I gang farther—an' that's this : am I to be less or mair nor I was afore ? It's agreed I canna be the same : if I canna be the same, I maun aither be less or greater than I was afore : whilk o' them is 't to be ? I'll be mair nor I was. To sink to less wad be to lowse grip o' my past as well 's o' my future. I see the thing as plain 's thing can be : the cure of a' ill 's jist mair life ! That's it ! Life abune an' ayont the life 'at took the strake ! An' gien throu' this hert-brak I come by mair life, it 'll be jist one o' the throes o' my h'avenly birth."

From this point it is the awakened soul that learns to teach. The education of the teacher and the taught is developed, and therein is set forth the value of the highest knowledge, the learning to know God and His will.

The story and its interest centres round the old castle, with its lost room and its strange Aeolian harp and beautiful old garden, the description of which is a most beautiful pre-Raphaelite picture.

Concerning the castle, with all its mystery and marvels, Donal says : " I never saw an old Castle before—at least not to make any close acquaintance with it—but there is not an aspect of the

grim old survival up there, interesting as every corner of it is, that moves me like the mere thought of a hillside, with the veil of the twilight coming down over it, making of it the last step of a stair for the descending foot of the Lord."

The cruel machinations of Lord Malvern and his son Forgue are the outcome of lives sold to the devil, and are set in contrast with the upward progress of Davie and Arctura who find the light, and freedom in obedience, through the teaching of God's servant, Donal Grant.

"Donal is still a present power of heat and light in the town of Auchars. He wears the same solemn look, the same hovering smile. They say to those who can read them, 'I know in whom I have believed.' It is the God who is the Father of the Lord that he believes in. His life is hid with Christ in God, and he has no anxiety about anything. The wheels of the coming chariot, moving fast or slow to fetch him, are always moving; and whether it arrive at night, or at cockcrowing, or in the blaze of noon, is one to him." So ends the story.

The story of *What's Mine's Mine* is one of Mac Donald's studies in character. The two principal figures are Highland sons of a poor clan. The mother of the two men is a severely orthodox Presbyterian of the Calvinistic type.

Alister, the elder brother and chief, is a strong,

earnest, devoted head of the clan, poor but noble to the finest thread of honour.

Ian, his brother, is almost the perfect type of gentleman by birth and education. He is the soul of truth and manliness, a well-read and well-travelled man of Christ.

The intercourse of this high-born, poverty-stricken trio with the vulgar *nouveau riche* family of the Peregrine Palmers, and the adventures and misadventures that befell them, is full of humour and pathos. Added interest is lent to the story because it vividly pictures the struggles of the poor Highland crofters with the British land-grabbers, and gives Mac Donald's views on some aspects of the land question and other social problems.

The pictures of nature are wonderfully fresh and strong, and are more clearly painted than some of William Black's scenes in the Hebrides ; the local colour and tone are as intense as in Hardy's Dorset stories.

The education that the real love of nature provides is finely set forth.

The love part of the story is very beautiful, and the way Mercy grows by the power of her affection until she becomes heroic of soul, is delicately and charmingly told.

The Elect Lady, published in 1888, is a simple story with a slender plot, the interest of which

centres in the wrongful possession of a certain Cellini cup that is held by a Scotch Laird, but the value of the book lies in the characters of Andrew, a young poet-ploughman-farmer, of absolute Christian life, and Dawtie, a servant-maid, whose ideal lay in the beauty of faithful service. These two souls are among the most perfect saints of high religious aristocracy.

Andrew's conversation on conduct, and on any subject he touches, is as profound and spiritual as it is ideally lovely and true.

It is his teaching that enables Dawtie to grow into the Elect Lady of heroic grace. Andrew and Dawtie live in the light of those who walk with God, and they give forth the light of His truth as naturally as the sun shines.

The influence of their lives falls on the Laird and George Crawford for condemnation, but for Miss Fordyce it becomes "the way of life."

In *Heather and Snow*, published in 1892, there is Steenie, with his ankles weak and his mind feeble, always looking for the "Bonny Man" to loose him from the bondage of his feet that are too heavy for him. He is a beautiful study with his sister Kirsty, one of the best of good women, with his love of night that brings him the sense of liberty, with his at-homeness in nature's wildest moods, and with his guardian companion, the dog Snootie.

Steenie had two dwelling-places, one a stone shelter on the summit of the "Horn," the other the "earth-house" or "cave" at its foot, which became his final shelter 'midst the terrible snow-storm, and where at last the idiot, foolish in this world's knowledge, but wiser than the wise of learning, heard the call and saw the vision of the "Bonny Man," for whose coming his life had been one long watch and waiting.

When Kirsty and her father David came to the "earth-house," where what was left of Steenie lay, "they found no angels on guard, for Steenie had not to get up again."

David wept the few tears of an old man over the son, "who had been of no use in the world but the best use—to love and be loved." Then, one at the head and the other at the feet, they brought the body out. Kirsty went back into the cave and took Steenie's shoes, tying them in her apron, saying, "His feet's no sic a weight noo."

The book ends with one of Kirsty's songs :

"LOVE IS HOME"

"Love is the part, and love is the whole,
Love is the robe and love is the pall,
Ruler of heart and brain and soul,
Love is the Lord and slave of all.
I thank thee, love, that thou lov'st me,
I thank thee more that I love thee."

Salted with Fire, the last of Mac Donald's

stories, appeared in 1897. It is a terrible story, with tones of tragedy that are heart-breaking.

Its purpose is the slow working out of retribution for the sin of a divinity student.

The woe of infinite sorrow rests upon the poor girl Ivy, until at last there comes the repentance, through the burning fire of inner retribution, of the wretched and miserable man who has ruined her.

The religious interest of the story is found in the characters of the shoemaker and his daughter Maggie, who finds Ivy's baby and cares for it until it is finally claimed by the true father and mother.

The old souter MacLear is one of the fine types of noble character who serve God in humble ways, walking in the light, knowing the truth, and doing His will. "For the souter absolutely believed in the Lord of Life, was always trying to do the things He said, and to keep His words abiding in Him. Therefore he was what the parson called a mystic, and yet the most practical man in the neighbourhood; making the best shoes because the Word of the Lord abode in him."

There is less of the world of nature in this book, but deep insight is revealed into the heart of man. The plot is very slight, but extremely clever and simple, and so truly natural that the drama reads as inevitable as fact, told as it is with great power and pathos.

CHAPTER XII

THE NOVELIST

English Stories

"Adela Cathcart," 1864; "Wilfred Cumbermede," 1871; "St. George and St. Michael," 1875; "Thomas Wingfold, Curate," 1876; "Paul Faber, Surgeon," 1879; "Mary Marston," 1881; "Home Again," 1887; "Stephen Archer, and other Stories," 1888; "Lilith," 1895.

1864. *Adela Cathcart*, the earliest of the English novels, is a story told in the first person by an old bachelor. Besides Adela, who is delicate in health, the reader is introduced to two brothers, a curate and a doctor, under the name of Armstrong. The characters are sketchy, and the narrative without any serious plot.

As a novel it is the least powerful of Mac Donald's works, the chief interest lying with "the story-telling club," which gives a collection of tales, parables, and poems, told by the members with varying significance. *The Wow o' Rivven* first appeared in this book, and was afterwards reprinted separately.

1871. The autobiographical story entitled

Wilfred Cumbermede is a vivid look-back, and recounts the sad, strange history of Wilfred and the small group of friends with whom he had been thrown in contact.

The childhood of repression and solitude, the schooldays and friendship with Charlie Osborne, the enquiry after God and the mystery of life, the hard dogmatic religion of Mr. Osborne, that creates unbelief as the only alternative, are the strands that are interwoven with the events, developing the characters through great unhappiness.

The weight of failure that rests over the fortunes and affections of the chief actors is more oppressive than in any other of Mac Donald's novels. In it no one is wholly right with God, but the bitter experience of the past at last schools the heart of Wilfred to rest in the perfect Will of Love.

The Swiss scenes on the Wengern Alp, the ice-cave in the Grindelwald Valley, the glimpse of the Eiger and the Jungfrau, and the awful silence of the mountains going down into the Lauterbrunnen Valley, when Wilfred was lost, are among some of the finest descriptions Mac Donald gives.

The inter-play of dreams, the mystery of the old house and ghost, the library, the sword, the church register, and the white mare Lilith, give the book features of interest that help to build up exciting scenes in the sad tragedy till the last page brings the dawn of hope.

1875. *St. George and St. Michael*, an English story of Puritan times, so called because St. George's Day was the birthday of the heroine, Dorothy Vaughan, the Royalist, and St. Michael's Day was the day on which the hero, Richard Heywood, the Parliamentarian, was born.

The interest centres in Raglan Castle, with the Earl of Worcester as its defender.

Dorothy's dog Marquis, and her pony Dick, Richard's horses Lady and Beelzebub, are features that form an important part in the story, with the fool Tom, son of the reputed witch, Mother Rees.

Dorothy Vaughan, Lord Herbert, and Richard Heywood are characters that illustrate the very soul of honour.

The historic foundations of the story are laid with great care and accuracy, and reveal a very close study of the events of the times. The romance of the story is run with great skill into the cast-iron mould of fact.

Mac Donald does ample justice to both Puritans and Catholics. From first to last we are in good company, with perfect gentlemen of marked chivalry and honour.

The story first appeared in *The Graphic*, and is much more popular in style than many of his earlier ones, and though full of religious thought and feeling, has less of the preaching reflections than most of his books contain.

The old Marquis is a fine figure, in spite of his gout and somewhat crusty ways. His grand faith, his beautiful hope—when Raglan Castle, the home of his fathers, was crumbling into ruin, and things of earthly splendour were dissolving into dust—in "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," give him a place among the best drawn of George Mac Donald's characters.

1876. In the story of *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*, there is set before the reader a sharply defined study of a young clergyman who enters the Church simply as a profession, does not attempt to make or preach his own sermons, and has no serious convictions at all.

Religion is for him a wholly outside and formal affair. He is suddenly awakened by meeting a clever lawyer, a sceptic, who says, "Tell me honestly—do you believe *one* word of all that?" meaning the accepted Christian teaching of the Church.

Wingfold is not a sceptic; he had simply received the orthodox faith on authority. When he began to consider what he did really believe, he discovered that he was sure of nothing, not even of the existence of God.

He does not give up his charge, but sets himself seriously to consider his position; and his gradual discovery of a real basis of faith is the

main purpose of the story. He makes the acquaintance of Polworth, who sets him on the right track, and he boldly confesses to his whole congregation his anomalous state of mind. He soon after makes the discovery that the only way to *know* the truth, is to begin to *do* the Will of God. This became the turning-point in his religious life; in obedience he commenced to learn, and from that time his gradual growth in faith was slow but sure.

The dramatic interest of the story centres in the history of Leopold, who has committed a murder. Wingfold helps this man to confession and penitence, and in so doing gains a personal revelation of the truth of the Gospel.

1879. In *Paul Faber*, sequel to *Thomas Wingfold*, Mac Donald brings out the conflict of honest simple Christian faith as set forth in the character of Wingfold, with the sincere unbelief of the scientific doctor. Faber is an Agnostic with real grit of character, kindly and generous by nature, clever and independent, but with a conscience that is hard and blind, though based on notions of justice and morality that he has failed to fulfil himself.

He condemns his wife for the very sin he has himself committed, but the full realisation of his own guilt humbles him at last into contrition, which becomes the first step towards a change in

nature that must lead upward, and there the story leaves him.

The contrast between the two men is very noble and strong, and Mac Donald has nowhere drawn two characters of more fascinating interest and worth.

1881. *Mary Marston* is dedicated to William I. Matheson :

"Silver nor gold I have, an empty niche
Is all I offer thee, tried friend and sure ;
But with thy name I make my nothing rich,
And largely give, although the gift be poor."

This novel gives a peep into a draper's shop, and presents, in Mary's father, the most noble type of shopkeeper that Mac Donald has drawn, though Mr. Drew, in *Wingfold, Curate*, runs him close. Mr. Jones, the butcher, in *Paul Faber*, is of a good sort ; but on the bourgeois element in society—the smug, pious, greedy, ignorant, vulgar set—Mac Donald is hard, and deals faithfully with them, notwithstanding the fact that his readers were to be largely composed of these "lower middles."

Mary is a sweet, strong woman who owes much to her father's teaching and influence. She learnt many lessons from him, but one passing incident fixed itself on her heart and memory. Every evening, when Mary came to say "good-night" to her father, she brought, for him to

wind up, her small watch which had been his gift to her. Once Mr. Marston, not very long before he died, having wound up the watch, was handing it back, when inadvertently he let it fall on the fender of the hearth, and it was completely broken. As Mary sought to recover the fragments, Mr. Marston said, "I am very sorry, Mary, but if it's past repair I will get you another. You don't seem to mind it much."

"Why should I, father dear. When one's father breaks one's watch, what is there to say but, 'I am very glad it was you did it.'"

"My child," replied Mr. Marston, "say that to your Heavenly Father when He breaks something for you. He will do it from love, not from blundering."

The words came back to her in other days.

1887. *Home Again*, a parable of a soulless woman, is in some aspects a slight story, thinner in treatment, without the body and depth of many of Mac Donald's books. The lack of reality and inevitableness may be intentional, because the novel is meant to be a parable. In it, Mac Donald draws the character of the worst woman, Lufa, that is to be found among his *dramatis personae*.

The man, Walter, is not a hero, but one who believed himself to have high ideals, with ambitions, not destitute of ability, but overestimating the gifts he had, especially in poetry.

He goes up to London to seek his fortune in literature. He secures work as a writer of ephemeral articles and criticisms.

In time he gets into society, and becomes acquainted with Lady Tremaine, whose daughter Lufa is an authoress anxious for fame and distinction.

Walter is bewitched with Lady Lufa. She is pleased with some verses he has published in *The Observatory*, sets them to music and sings them to him, and he becomes more captivated.

Lady Lufa invites him to their country house. He goes, and writes a review of her new volume of poetry, which he praises highly, though he knows that the verses are poor and commonplace.

Walter returns to London, and writes a book of poems, and at Christmas stays again with Lady Tremaine and Lufa, only to be more infatuated. He meets Sefton, a cousin of Lufa's, who is really in love with her.

Sefton tells a ghost-story about a bodiless lady that he had once encountered, and when he finished his startling narrative, he said that he had once met a more fearful kind of creature, "a creature," he said slowly, "that has a body, but no soul to it. All body, with brain enough for its affairs, it has *no* soul. Such will never wander about after they are dead! There will be nothing to wander."

That night Sefton tells Walter about his own love for Lufa, but bids him propose to her.

The next day Walter gives her a copy of his new poem and goes for a ride with her. In the afternoon he makes full confession of his devotion and love, only to find in Lufa the revelation of the utter heartlessness of the woman he adored. He discovered her to be absolutely selfish and soulless.

It was a fearful shock to his nature, and was followed by a still more cruel conversation that Walter unwittingly overheard, in which Lufa speaks with the most unfeeling contempt about the man who in tears and agony had laid his heart at her feet, and for whom she had expressed a desire to be a sisterly friend.

There is one more interview, in which the consummation of all selfish meanness is manifested by Lady Lufa.

Walter goes back to London disillusioned, to drink the full cup of bitterness, and to know for himself the truth of Sefton's story, that it is a much more awful thing to meet a soulless, but beautiful body, than to encounter in darkness a bodiless spirit.

Funds fail him. In poverty and sickness he goes home to his father, saying, "Father, I have sinned," and by and by the true spirit is born within.

The sketch of Lady Lufa is that of a type of character the most hopeless that Mac Donald has drawn, the most unworthy and cruelly heartless,

and is in sharp contrast to Molly, who is the real heroine.

The truth in this work of fiction is to be seen in corresponding facts of life, where heartless selfishness may make a soulless body out of an otherwise fair and charming woman of the world.

Walter was a poor and selfish creature, but faith and repentance made of him such a man and poet that he could write thus :

"Into the gulf of an empty heart
Something must always come!
'What will it be?' I think with a start,
And a fear that makes me dumb.

"I cannot sit at my outer gate
And call what shall soothe my grief;
I cannot unlock to a King in state,
Cannot bar a wind-swept leaf!

"Hopeless were I if a loving care
Sat not at the spring of my thought—
At the birth of my history, blank and bare,
Of the thing I have not wrought.

"If God were not, this hollow need,
All that I now call *me*,
Might wallow with demons of hate and greed,
In a lawless and shoreless sea!

"Watch the door of this sepulchre,
Sit, my Lord, on the stone,
Till the life within it rise and stir,
And walk forth to claim its own."

Stephen Archer, and other Stories appeared in 1888. There are five short stories including *The*

Gifts of the Child Christ which came out in a Christmas number of *The Graphic*. The child Sophie, a lonely step-daughter, left, with little affection, to a nurse, Alice, hears a sermon on the text, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"; and without knowing the meaning of the word "chasteneth," prays continually for it in order that she might have the love she does understand, but of which her life has been so bereft.

On Christmas Eve Sophie goes to bed thinking about the coming Christ, for she had the impression that on His birthday He really came to earth again as a little child. She rises very early to look for His coming, and entering the spare room finds a beautiful little baby asleep. She takes it gently out of the bed and nurses it, but it will not wake. Her father comes and discovers both in silence. Sophie, looking up into his face, says, "Jesus is dead. He came too early, and there was no one to take care of Him, and He's dead."

"No, no," replies her father, "Jesus is not dead; it is only your little brother that hadn't life enough, and is gone back to God for more."

From that time the father saw more in his neglected little girl; new tenderness was awakened for her, and reverence for the Divine idea enclosed in her ignorance, for her childish wisdom and calm seeking, until at length he would

have been horrified at the thought of training her up in *his* way. Had she not a way of her own to go? following not the dead Jesus, but "Him who liveth for evermore."

New love grew between husband and wife, and the step-mother who had lost a son for a season gained a daughter for ever.

Such were the gifts the Christ-child brought to one home that Christmas, and the days of the mourning of that household were over.

Within this story there is also a small parable in the love-making of Alice, or Miss Cox, and John Jephson, wherein is set forth the ways of the world and the undesirableness of much possession and many things.

1895. *Lilith* is of all Mac Donald's books the most strange and mystical. It is a return to *Phantastes* in style, only with deeper insight and wiser significance. It gives a glimpse into the unseen world, and at times is Dantesque in its pictures drawn of existence in a state beyond this earthly life. Mr. Vane steps out of his library into the dreamland the other side of the veil of time. He wanders into the country of the Little Ones, and there regrets that he is grown up, and wishes some one would teach him "to grow the other way and become a little one." The account of these little folks is as charming and beautiful as the dialogue between the two

skeletons in the chapter, "A Grotesque Tragedy," is weird and clever.

This fantasia of dreams, with its glimpses into the spiritual world where time and place are no more, reveals the character of one who, having done little here, and going into another state, still fails to be of much service to any one, but nevertheless learns to love, and finds that men must sleep to awake and die to live.

While travelling with Mr. Vane through this realm of mystery many readers have felt the need of the Interpreter.

CHAPTER XIII

CHILDREN'S STORIES AND OTHER BOOKS

"The Princess and Curdie"; "The History of Gutta-Percha Willie"; "The Wise Woman"; "At the Back of the North Wind"; "A Rough Shaking"; "Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood"; "Short Stories"; Children in the Novels.

THE Children's Stories are of such a character that most of them could be read through by a child simply for the story. They all captivate the natural imagination by the vivid realisation of every-day things as in a beautiful dream. But for those who have eyes to see through the clear flow of the tale, the bed of truth can be plainly perceived under the running stream, that seems widening to the river and ever going onward to the infinite sea. The stories seldom end; they seem to drop down into some rock-pool for the brook to come out again farther down, a little nearer the timeless shore.

All the children's stories are living. There is endless variety of scene, a moving panorama

of events—the kaleidoscope of circumstance under the hand of time is continually dropping changes, strange, beautiful, odd and terrible, but there is no accident or fate other than the law of Providence and progress. Sometimes the motion is slow and even, as it is in life, and sometimes quick and rugged. The nights are alive, from the stars above to the owls, bats, and glow-worms below. The sleep is living slumber; closed eyes are often seeing more and farther than is revealed to open lids. The people, small and great, are growing like seeds in the dark. And the world of Mac Donald's romance has nights when angels watch and wait on earth as well as in heaven.

All the children's stories are truthful: there is never anything false, though very much that is unlikely. There is no "make believe," no sham or pretence: things are often "topsy turvy," and the people "wrong side out," but so they really are often in life, according to our vision. Best of all, they are full of the highest teaching; truth Divine runs through them like a golden thread. The pattern and design of the tales are curious, and sometimes not to be accounted for, but the precious strands of moral and spiritual glory gleam out; for nothing can hide them. There is less preaching, but more vision. To the children Mac Donald has given the best he has to bestow.

The Princess and Curdie.—Curdie is the son of a miner who works for the King of the country, seeking silver in the mountains. After being tested and tried, he is sent on a mission to the Royal palace to work out deliverance for the King and reform in the Royal household, being accompanied by a faithful creature, Lina, who helps him in all his adventures. It is a brilliant child's story in the realm of Fairyland, but all the time it is an evangel of truth. The talk and scenes are parables. The White Pigeon and the Great-grandmother of the King, with her talk on "What's in a name?" are like gems of the spirit set in pure gold. The final victory of the Uglies over the Traitors, after the King has passed through healing flames of sacrifice and glory, is full of symbolism.

There is very little direct teaching, but the strange parable declares its own meaning as it goes on. Great will be the interest of the child who reads this story, but greater still the stimulus for thought in the parent.

The History of Gutta-Percha Willie, the Working Genius, is the story for children of how a doctor's boy of nine, wishing to be useful, learned to work with his hands and then with his brains. Gathering much, first from the kind old woman who taught him to knit, then from Hector, the crippled shoemaker, and the village carpenter, at last he

became able to make a water-wheel, and discovered in the ruins close by his home the old Priory well with its medicinal waters. By and by he becomes a doctor like his father, and the old Priory is made a centre for health and healing for many. The advent of his little sister, the coming of the grandmother, the talks, especially with Hector and the minister, Mr. Shepherd, are all told with freshness and interest for boys and girls, with the most ingenious accounts of the mechanical constructions of Willie. The bright and happy spirit of work and service is full of inspiration for old and young.

The Wise Woman: a parable. Rosamond (the Rose of the world), a spoilt, wild, selfish Princess, makes her father and mother very miserable. She thinks herself "somebody" of very great importance because she is the daughter of the King and Queen. She gives her parents so much trouble that they send for the Wise Woman to ask what is to be done with this naughty child. The Wise Woman takes Rosamond in her mysterious cloak and carries her far away to her cottage: she tries to make her good by giving her work to do; but the child will neither obey nor trust the Wise Woman, and after a day or two runs away.

In a shepherd home there is another child named Agnes, about the same age, who thinks

herself "somebody," and is vain and selfish, giving constant trouble to her parents. The Wise Woman comes and takes her away to her cottage. Rosamond, in her wanderings, is found by the mother of Agnes, who takes her in, thinking to fill the place of her own lost daughter. Here, too, she shows her pride and bad temper and is looked after by the shepherd's dog Prince, whom she learns to love. One day, when out with the dog, an old woman passing by called Prince and he went to her. Rosamond was so angry that she threw a stone at the old woman, and then Prince vanished and Rosamond found herself alone and lost. She wandered on cold and hungry in a dreary country, and as night came on grew very frightened. In the darkness she was found by the Wise Woman, who talked to her and told her that the reason of all her troubles was that she did not do what was right; then left her, saying she would help her to be good and lovely, but that she must come back alone and of her own free will. Rosamond found her way *straight* back to the cottage door and was welcomed by her wise friend. Then the Wise Woman set her some tests to see if she would really try to do right; but she failed the first and second time, and in penitence she asked the Wise Woman to help her to be good. And this time Rosamond learnt the lesson to think nothing of herself, which is the beginning

of all good. At last she asked the Wise Woman to forgive all her wrongfulness and all the trouble she had caused her.

In the meantime Agnes had gone to the palace, because the King had proclaimed that all lost children should be taken there in the hope of finding the Princess. The King, when he saw Agnes, dismissed her to be a maid in the kitchen, but here she told how her parents had sheltered Rosamond ; so, in order to trace her, the shepherd and his wife were summoned, and, while the King was interviewing them, the real Princess returned and told the story of the Wise Woman's goodness and how she had learnt to be a loving and obedient child.

At the Back of the North Wind is certainly one of the most charming of Mac Donald's children's stories. For the little folks it is a source of great delight, and for adults it is a precious parable. It is the story of the boy Diamond, who, finding his way to the Back of the North Wind, teaches us all that those who are with and in the currents of Divine love and might feel no bitterness in the wind-storms ; that the ministry of the Spirit, whatever form it takes, is really a giver of blessings ; and that behind all the tempests and hurricanes of this life is peace. For the storms of earth are only the breath of the living God and Father, who has all his children in His safe-keeping, however hard the North Wind blows.

The horse Diamond is a feature of the book—as full of interest as it is characteristic of Mac Donald's love of animals. His history is interwoven into the story with much genius. The scene in the wretched home of the drunken cabman,—whose baby Diamond nurses as an angel messenger—when his heart was full of misery because he had struck his wife in drink, is the opportunity for Mac Donald beautifully to remark—"This misery was the voice of the great Love that made him, and his wife, and the baby and Diamond, speaking in his heart and telling him to be good. For that great Love speaks in the most wretched and dirty hearts; only the tone of its voice depends on the echoes of the place in which it sounds. On Sinai it was thunder, in the cabman's heart it was misery: in the soul of St. John it was perfect blessedness."

A Rough Shaking tells of a boy Clare, the incarnation of the spirit of love and usefulness in whom dwells the heart of pity. It is the illustration of how "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." For Clare by right of his love charms the fierce bull Nimrod, makes friends with the Puma, and controls all the animals he comes across. But his meekness, honesty, and truthfulness roused the devil in the hearts of bad men and women,

and he had indeed a rough shaking from the brutal forces of this world, as well as from the earthquake. "But the shaking earth was his mother, and she taught him to dwell in a world that cannot be shaken."

The story from first to last, with its strange adventures and thrilling scenes, delights the young hearts that read it. But older eyes cannot take in the story without feeling the presence of the Lord of Love. "For Clare never thought of being loved. He was too busy loving, with so many about him to love, to think of himself. Only great lovers like God are able to do that; and they help God to make love grow. But there is little truth in love where there is no wisdom in it." Clare was wise with the heavenly love, and ministered alike to the beasts of the field and the beasts of the street, in mercy and tenderness to all.

Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood is a story told in the first person, and to most boys who read it, will appear like the autobiography of Mac Donald's own childhood; but it is the work of pure fiction told with the power of sincere imagination. It is full of dry humour and stirring incident. The characters are all fresh and strong —the good clergyman the father, Mrs. Mitchell, the kelpie and *bête noir* of the hero; Kirsty the faithful servant, Turkey the valiant friend,

and soft wandering Willie; each and all play their part and leave behind their lessons, that make the book one of pure delight and healthy influence for boys who know the worth of courage, manliness, and truth.

Long before the "tit-bit," "snippety," and "snack" style of reading had come into vogue, Mac Donald had written some *Short Stories*, not to meet a popular demand, but because little parables may be quite as good and beautiful as whole volumes, as he had learnt from the Great Teacher. Among these may be mentioned *The Castle*, a parable that is most suggestive and interesting and holds the open secret of a powerful sermon; *The Broken Swords*, a story of how courage may grow where fear dwelt, but not so suitable for children as *The Golden Key*, which tells the parable of a boy who found at the foot of the rainbow the golden key that, to the sound of Aeolian music, opened a door which disclosed a golden stair within, up which he and his companion climbed out of the earth; "and still climbing rose above it." They were in the rainbow. Far abroad, over ocean and land, they could see through its transparent walls the earth beneath their feet.

Stairs beside stairs wound up together, and beautiful beings of all ages climbed along with them.

They knew that they were going up to the country whence the shadows fall.

In addition to these, other brief and beautiful stories that interest children may be mentioned: *The Light Princess*, *Cross Purposes*, *The Shadows*, and *Little Daylight*.

Among the stories written for adults, Mac Donald often gives us the history of children most fascinatingly, so that whether he is writing about them or for them, talking to the children about old people, or to old people about the children, he is equally apt. Many are the beautiful scenes and touches in the most important novels about children in their home and school-life.

In their training and teaching we have the miniature of the larger training and teaching of children of an older growth. From the infancy of childhood to the infancy of old age, all are scholars, and each one of his characters reveals the Father's dealings with, and leadings of, his children in the school-house below.

The schoolday adventures of Alec and Annie in *Alec Forbes of Howglen* are told as if they were photographs taken from real life.

The early days of Robert Falconer, and the rough experience of Shargar, are as real as if Mac Donald had lived the life of both.

In contrast to this rugged life led by Scotch boys, he depicts in *The Seaboard Parish* the

beautiful home-life of an English country vicarage, and the exquisite response in the children to the Christ-like influence of the parents. With graphic skill he describes the radiating force for blessing a sick-room may become, in the picture given of Connie after her accident, when for years she was compelled to lie on her back.

"It soon became evident to me" (*i.e.*, the father) "that that room was like a new and more sacred heart to the house. At first it radiated gloom to the remotest corners; but soon rays of light began to appear mingling with the gloom. I could see that bits of news were carried from it to the servants in the kitchen, in the garden, in the stable, and over the way to the home-farm. Even in the village, and everywhere over the parish, I was received more kindly and listened to more willingly, because of the trouble I and my family were in. Previous to this, it had been no unusual thing to see Wynnie and Dora impatient with each other, but it was soon evident not only that Wynnie had grown more indulgent to Dora's vagaries, but that Dora was more submissive to Wynnie, while the younger children began to obey their eldest sister with a willing obedience, keeping down their effervescence within doors, and letting it off only out of doors, or in the out-houses.

"When Constance began to recover a little, then the sacredness of that chamber began to show

itself more powerfully, radiating on all sides a yet stronger influence of peace and goodwill. It was like a fountain of gentle light, quieting and bringing more or less into tune all that came within the circle of its sweetness. This brings me to speak again about my lovely child. For surely a father may speak thus of a child of God. He cannot regard his child as his, even as a book he has written may be his. A man's child is his because God has said to him, 'Take this child and nurse it for Me.' She is God's making; God's marvellous invention, to be tended and cared for, and ministered unto as one of his precious things; a young angel, let me say, who needs the air of this lower world to make her wings grow. And while he regards her thus, he will see all other children in the same light, and will not dare to set up his own against others of God's brood with the new-budding wings.

"Show me the man who is tender, reverential, gracious towards the children of other men, and I will show you the man who will love and tend his own best, to whose heart his own will flee for their first refuge after God, when they catch sight of the cloud in the wind."

All the glimpses of children are beautiful in their sympathy. Mac Donald never condescends to a child, and is never childish, whether he writes for children or of them. Having the child-heart he can write about them and talk

to them as one of themselves, with the wisdom of an elder brother.

In *Dealings with the Fairies*, illustrated by Arthur Hughes, and published in 1867, the title page bears the suggestive legend, "Where more is meant than meets the ear," and is dedicated to: "My Children."

OTHER BOOKS

"England's Antiphon;" "Exotics" and "Rampolli;" "Cabinet of Gems"; "If I had a Father"; "Orts"

Among the books that are not stories may be mentioned *England's Antiphon*, published in 1868.

In this book Mac Donald traces the course of religious poetry from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. He says modestly that "if its poetry be the cream of a people's thought, some true indications of the history of its religious feeling must be found in its religious verse, and I hope I have not altogether failed in setting forth these indications," and concludes the Preface with this remark, "Heartily do I throw this my small pebble at the head of the great Sabbath-breaker Schism."

The book is called *England's Antiphon* because Antiphon means "the responsive song of the parted choir." He says "song is the speech of feeling. Even the prose of emotion always wanders into the rhythmical. Hence it is one

chief mode in which men unite to praise God; for in thus praising they hold communion with each other, and the praise expands and grows. . . . No man could sing as he has sung, had not others sung before him. Deep answereth unto deep, face to face, praise to praise. To the sound of the trumpet the harp returns its own vibrating response—alike, but how different! The religious song of the country is a growth, rooted deep in all its story."

The book is a careful study of sacred lyrics and poetry, containing many gems of religious verse. The work reveals much learning and long labour, with wise and discerning judgment. In concluding, Mac Donald says:

"I have thus traced—how slightly!—the course of the religious poetry of England, from simple song, lovingly regardful of sacred story and legend, through the chant of philosophy, to the full-toned lyric of adoration. . . . The singers will yet sing on to him that hath ears to hear. When he returns to seek them, the shadowy door will open to his touch, the long-drawn aisles receding will guide his eye to the carven choir, and then they will stand, the sweet singers, content to repeat ancient psalm and new song to the prayer of the humblest whose heart would join England's Antiphon."

Exotics, published in 1876, is a collection of translations of the spiritual songs of Novalis,

the hymn-book of Luther, and other poems from the German and Italian.

Rampolli, "growths from a long-planted root, being translations from new and old, chiefly from the German," along with *A Year's Diary of an Old Soul*, published in 1897. The book consists chiefly in a reprint of the poems in *Exotics* and the addition of the *Old Soul's Diary*.

A new and cheap edition, 1905, has been issued under the title, *The Diary of an Old Soul and Translations of other Spiritual Verse*, retaining the original order of the contents of *Rampolli* under the present title, because *The Diary of an Old Soul* is the best-known of MacDonald's poetry.

A Cabinet of Gems cut and polished by Sir Philip Sidney; now, for the more radiance, presented without their setting. Published in 1892. The volume contains a full-length portrait of Sir Philip Sidney, from a miniature by Isaac Oliver, in the Royal Library, Windsor.

In the Preface, written at Bordighera in 1891, Mac Donald says, "By these extracts from writings I have long loved, I hope to help some of my friends to a genuine acquaintance with the writer, who was the centre of more personal affection and admiration than was ever any one, I venture to think, of his years: he was but two-and-thirty when he died.

"For few of those to whom his name has been familiar from childhood as that of a famous man,

know anything more of him than the story of his yielding the water brought him, when 'thirsty with excess of bleeding,' to a dying soldier, with the words, 'This man's necessity is still greater than mine'; an instance of self-denial which, in the case of him who thus denied himself, needs move no astonishment. How worthless then is fame, when of him whom they praise, the praisers are so ignorant! But no one can gather even such drops as I here offer of 'the precious life-blood of a master-spirit,' if he be himself a true man, without in a measure knowing one of the noblest of Englishmen. Before a great man the fool shouts; the wise man prays him to go home to his house."

Mac Donald wrote one Drama, which is printed in the book entitled *Stephen Archer and other Tales*, 1888.

The play is called *If I had a Father*. It deals with some people of low-life in "high-life," especially a well-to-do snob Waterfield, and with some noble characters, Mattie and Bill, in "low-life"; also Thomas, a Lancashire man of very humble birth, who talks the Lancashire dialect with an ease and accuracy that Ben Brierley or Edwin Waugh, for whom Mac Donald had a high appreciation, might envy.

The dialogue is often bright and clever, but as a play it is not of first-rate quality, and failed to find its way on to the stage. The

plot is meagre, but as a study of character very interesting, and less subjective than anything he has written.

Mac Donald's contributions to current periodicals has been small, except for stories published, when working with Mr. Strahan, in *Good Words*, *Good Words for the Young*, *The Argosy*, and *The Sunday Magazine*.

In early days he wrote on Browning's *Christmas Eve*, and occasionally for *The Nonconformist*, *The Eclectic Review*, and *The Christian Spectator*. Some of these articles reappeared in *Orts*.

Orts is a book of essays and articles on a variety of subjects, dating from 1864 to 1880. Three of the papers are on Shakespeare, one on Browning, one on Wordsworth, and another on Shelley. Two "are fragmentary presentments of larger meditations," taken down from extempore utterance.

The two last papers are sermons, one preached or read in the Unitarian Chapel, Essex Street, London, 1879.

One of the papers is on T. T. Lynch's *Essays on Some of the Forms of Literature*, four lectures delivered by Lynch at the Royal Institute, Manchester.

The paper on *Polish* was written in 1865. Polish, Mac Donald maintains, is not putting on; it is taking off the rough and useless. "Polish

away this rudeness, that awkwardness. Correct everything, self-assertion which includes nine-tenths of all vulgarity.

"Imitate no one's behaviour; that is to paint. Do not think about yourself; that is to varnish. Put what is wrong right, and what is in you will show itself in harmonious behaviour. Polish is for fuller revelation."

He also discusses the polish of style and of manners. *Style*, he says, may be called the manner of intellectual utterance, and *manners* the style of social utterance.

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY

Mac Donald's work is the best revelation of his character. He has lived the songs he sung. He is the best he wrote.

He is broad in all his views, his sympathies are wide, and though he took no part in active politics, he has been a consistent Liberal all through his life, and had an enthusiastic regard for Gladstone.

Born and bred a Congregationalist, he became a member of the Church of England, always retaining his earlier friendships and his freedom to preach in Nonconformist churches.

He had unbounded admiration for the band of heroes of Italian liberty—Mazzini, Saffi, and Garibaldi. His poems to Gordon evince the high regard in which he held the hero of Khartoum. His affection for Kingsley and Lynch was full of appreciation. He was always generous in his praise, even of the men from whom he differed in opinion or creed.

His industry—in spite of delicate health and innumerable calls on his time, for he was never too busy to do a kindness—was remarkable. His work was never hurried or scamped, but accurate and careful in all he did. He learnt the art of *polish*, as he taught, not by putting on, but by rubbing down and taking off.

His MSS. were beautifully written, but scored and re-scored many times as the evolution of his thought grew perfect. He learnt the art of fine finish by taking the greatest pains and care over the construction of every sentence.

His large correspondence was carried on with business-like and gentlemanly punctuality. And the noble art of letter-writing was not renounced for halfpenny postcards. His letters invariably bore some sign of character and individuality.

Even to the people who bothered him for autographs he was never rude. Once, in a friend's house, and before he got up in the morning, he signed his name in the birthday-book of a dressmaker, who called because he had "done her good."

The kindly interest he took in "small" and "poor" authors was most gracious. He helped them with counsel and advice, and while faithful in showing faults he never failed to give encouragement and practical aid where he could. The goodness of his heart was never more clearly seen than when engaged in helping lame dogs, of all

sorts and sizes, over stiles. He followed with attention great public questions, social problems, and benevolent efforts for the moral elevation and redemption of the poor and neglected. He cared very little for public praise or blame, and had no desire for fame. His one desire was to be a good and true workman, therefore he could leave all results to take care of themselves.

Mac Donald's intellectual reach is very wide, his knowledge of literature large and thorough. He is a good classic and is also well acquainted with German verse and prose, made a great study of Dante and Italian poetry, and read French with perfect ease and understood Spanish and Dutch. Almost all his novels reveal his love of books and his intimate acquaintance with English writers from Chaucer downwards.

No man ever set himself up to be less of a judge of men or a critic of their work than Mac Donald. But simply because he has real discernment and sees truly, and loves the good, the true, and the beautiful, he knows infallibly what is excellent. His literary judgment is always right. He has an unerring instinct for knowing the best, and throughout all his books his remarks on men and their writings, as on Shakespeare and his characters, are most wise and illuminating.

He seldom finds fault, but continually finds virtue in other men's work. His judgments are always sound.

He took no "thought for the morrow," and has never worried about *things* of little or no importance. But no man understood better the value of money, or put what he had to better account. He was remarkably economical, and always wise and consistent in the management of his affairs. His personal economy, which was saintly, made it easier for him to be generous. He has been divinely improvident about material and temporal interests, but divinely provident and careful about having reserve of oil lest the Bridegroom tarry. Because always prepared for the Master's coming, he was ever ready for the next duty. For him every window looks towards heaven, and every door opens into the House of God.

He has drunk of the cup of anguish and of the chalice of rapture. He has sipped of the Eucharist feast and knows the goblet of life may hold its draught of bitter grief but its dregs may be bliss and benediction. He has tasted the grapes of Eschol, nevertheless reassures us, that the good wine is kept until the last. He has been too earnest not to be without sorrow, and too hopeful not to be without gladness. Therefore he has been "always rejoicing." He has more effectively taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man than any living writer, and his whole life has been spent in expounding the message that "God is Love."

Mac Donald's *style* is hard to define. It is simple and natural; there is no flourish or rhetoric, no effort to be stylish. It is well-expressed, good thought. There is an easy fluency of language that adequately conveys the intention of the mind. He is never laboured, yet sometimes the sentences are long and involved; but the meaning is always discoverable, though the thoughts of his heart are sometimes more subtle than words can make perfectly plain. He thinks profoundly and feels deeply; therefore he is not superficial, and consequently not always easy to understand.

He is unconventional, because always true to his own individuality. And because he is a mystic his style is mystical, but not misty. He is at his best when most effortless, his own good thoughts flowing unchecked, as in soliloquy; in full soul meditation he is most himself.

The romantic character of his style is a marked feature; his method of treatment is to cut into relief the characters by revealing their inner life, their thought and their ideas.

Obscure and humble personalities stand out in noble portraiture by being carved out from the surface of their natural surroundings.

The thrilling incidents of the stories arise not from accident, but from the relation in which they stand to the men and women for the development of their character.

The conversations are self-revealing. The whole artistic purpose is to set forth the full growth of moral and spiritual life in the *dramatis personae* with the light and shade of poetic suggestion.

The essential religiousness of all Mac Donald's work distinguishes him from other contemporary novelists. His stories, no less than his sermons, have been, like the oracles of the Prophets of old, burdened with the message of truth. He has called his unspoken sermons "wingless words," possibly because they were not uttered, and perhaps because his poems were his "winged words."

He reached his high-water mark in his verse, and the spring-tide is to be found in *The Diary of an Old Soul*, which is the full ripe expression of his maturity. Herein he gives himself out most richly and completely. In perfect poetic form the soul-revelation is made. The level of inspiration is continuous; there is no decline. It is as sustained in spiritual thought and feeling as if it were one unbroken poem; those who know it best would find it difficult to make any selection of stanzas as more typical and characteristic than others.

It is the work by which he can be most fully known, and which alone would give him a permanent place in English literature. It was written in the zenith of his power and is a reservoir

of distilled beauty, a source of influence which will affect future generations and cause his name to be revered and beloved even more in the future than to-day.

The one other element that marks all his work is the subjective character that runs through every book. This has been the vitalising strength in all his stories. It has hindered the dramatic force of his novels, but it has given a unique trait to the whole. Few writers could afford to be so inward in their work. It is the supreme virtue of his books that he could be so entirely himself and yet obtrude no egotism to the world. He has only attained this rare quality because he has lost himself in God and yet has bestowed on others the best God has given him, with selfless devotion.

He has brought his alabaster box of precious nard and broken it at his Master's feet, and the Father's house is filled "with the odour of the ointment" for others to share the fragrance.

EPILOGUE

WHILE this book has been going through the press the spirit of the Saint and Poet has passed into the fuller and larger life where nothing has gone from him but the sleep, and, to use his own words, "leaving is left behind." His beautiful character and work are bequeathed as the permanent heritage of those who know and love him.

The end here and the beginning there came to him in quiet peace in the house of his daughter, Mrs. Troup, at Sagamere, Ashstead, Surrey, where he had been nursed for some months.

On Monday, September 18th, 1905, in the eighty-first year of his age, the call for which he had long been waiting came, and he went forth on the ancient way trodden by the feet of saints and illuminated by the Lord of Light.

On Thursday, September 21st, in strict and characteristic privacy, the funeral took place. Without any crowd or display, in the dignity of simplicity, the service was held in the Parish Church of the little village, conducted by the Rector, the Rev. F. Lucas, assisted by the Rev.

Kingsbury Jamieson, of Chislehurst, son-in-law of George Mac Donald, and attended only by those nearest and dearest. After the service, all that was mortal was cremated at Woking.

Thus has passed onward one of the truest, noblest, and most beautiful souls that has lived in this present age. His career needs no comment, for no man has revealed himself more completely than George Mac Donald in the work he has done. Though much has been said about him in almost every paper in the country, and many things of fresh interest have appeared in the chorus of praise that is still rising, no modern writer less requires a biography or memoir, because all he was may be learnt and known from the songs he sung, the sermons he gave us, and the stories he has written. And always will he be beloved for what he has said and done, for unto the treasury of his Lord he cast in all the living he had, and withheld nothing that he could give or do to fulfil the Father's Will.

THE BOOKS OF GEORGE MAC DONALD

1855. "Within and Without."
1857. "Poems."
1858. "Phantastes, a Faerie Romance."
1863. "David Elginbrod."
1864. "Adela Cathcart."
1864. "The Portent" (a story of the inner vision of the Highlander).
1865. "Alec Forbes."
1866. "Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood."
1867. "The Disciples, and other Poems."
1867. "Dealings with the Fairies."
1867. "Guild Court."
1867. Vol. I. of "Unspoken Sermons."
1868. "The Seaboard Parish."
1868. "England's Antiphon."
1868. "Robert Falconer."
1870-72. "Good Words for the Young." Edited by George Mac Donald and Norman MacLeod.
1870. "The Miracles of Our Lord."

1871. "Works of Fancy and Imagination." 10 Vols.
1871. "At the Back of the North Wind."
1871. "The Princess and the Goblin."
1871. "Wilfred Cumbermede."
1871. "Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood."
1872. "The Vicar's Daughter."
1873. "Gutta-Percha Willie."
1875. "St. George and St. Michael" (in *The Graphic*).
1875. "Malcolm."
1875. "The Wise Woman."
1876. "Thomas Wingfold, Curate" (in *The Day of Rest*).
1876. "Exotics" (a translation of the Spiritual Songs of Novalis, etc.).
1877. "The Marquis of Lossie."
1879. "Paul Faber, Surgeon."
1879. "Sir Gibbie."
1880. "A Book of Strife" ("Diary of an Old Soul").
1881. "Mary Marston."
1882. "Castle Warlock."
1882. "The Princess and Curdie."
1882. "The Gifts of the Child Christ."
1882. "Weighed and Wanting."
1883. "Donal Grant."
1883. "The Imagination, and other Essays."
1883. "The Threefold Cord."

1884. "Letters from Hell," with *Preface* by George Mac Donald.
1885. Vol. II. of "Unspoken Sermons."
1885. "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*." A study with the text of the folio of 1623.
1886. "What's Mine's Mine."
1887. "Home Again."
1888. "The Elect Lady."
1888. "Stephen Archer, and other Tales."
1889. Vol. III. of "Unspoken Sermons."
1890. "The Light Princess."
1891. "A Rough Shaking."
1891. "There and Back."
1891. "The Flight of the Shadow."
1892. "The Hope of the Gospel" (Sermons).
1892. "A Cabinet of Gems, cut and polished by Sir Philip Sidney; now, for the more radiance, presented without their setting by George Mac Donald."
1893. "Poetical Works" (2 Vols. complete).
1893. "Heather and Snow."
1893. "A Dish of Orts."
1895. "Lilith."
1895. "The Lost Princess."
1897. "Salted with Fire."
1897. "Rampolli. Growths from long-planted roots, translated chiefly from the German."

1904. "Fairy Tales" (new and collected edition).

1905. "The Diary of an Old Soul" and translations of other spiritual verse (new edition).

1905. "Phantastes" (new edition, illustrated by Arthur Hughes).

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